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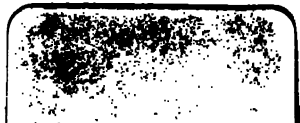
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Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury

*Engraved by J. Freeman
from an original picture in the British Museum*

Published by Archr Fullerton & Co. Glasgow





Lady Anne Grey
1557.

Engraved by J. Freeman

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be found that he had been guilty of non-appearance, the laws had affixed a very slight penalty to that offence. But it was in vain that Becket urged these excuses. The barons were ready to vote whatever sentence the king might please to dictate, and even the bishops, whatever secret attachment they might bear to the champion of their liberties, concurred with the rest in the design of humbling their primate. Accordingly the archbishop was condemned as guilty of contempt of court, and as wanting in the fealty which he had sworn to his sovereign. His goods and chattels were confiscated; and that this triumph over the church might be carried to the utmost, the sentence was ordered to be pronounced by one of its own members. This was a delicate office, and occasioned some dispute between the barons and the bishops; the former urging that they were laymen; that the spiritual lords were of the archbishop's order, and consequently it was their business to deliver judgment; the latter maintained that the sentence not being ecclesiastical but secular, belonged rather to the temporal lords. The king having put an end to the controversy by commanding the bishop of Winchester to perform the ungracious duty, which he did with great reluctance, Becket submitted to the decree, and all the prelates, except the bishop of London, who wished to commend himself to the king, became sureties for him. This victory was not enough; and Henry, whose violence had more of passion than of justice, or even policy in it, was determined to pursue his advantage. Next day he demanded of Becket the sum of three hundred pounds, which he had levied from the manors of Eye and Berkham, while in his possession. The archbishop agreed to pay the money rather than allow it to be any ground of quarrel; though he stated that more than the sum in question had been expended in repairs. In the subsequent meeting the king demanded five hundred marks which he affirmed he had lent Becket during the war at Thoulouse; and another sum to the same amount for which he alleged he had become his surety to a Jew. In addition to these two claims, he preferred a third of still greater importance. He required him to render all the accounts of his administration while chancellor, and to pay the balance due from the revenues of all the prelacies, abbacies and baronies which had, during that time, been subjected to his management. As this demand was totally unexpected, and required some delay, Becket requested leave to consult his suffragans in an affair of such intricacy. To pay or find security for a sum which, by the king's estimate, amounted to 44,000 marks, was impracticable; and the bishops were extremely at a loss what counsel to give him. By the advice of the bishop of Winchester, he offered 2,000 marks as a general satisfaction for all demands, but the offer was rejected. Some prelates exhorted him to resign his see, on condition of receiving an acquittal, while others were of opinion that he ought to submit himself entirely to the king's mercy. The bishop of Exeter thought that since the seas ran high they ought to furl their sails; and as the persecution was not general, but levelled at a single person, it were better to throw their pilot over board than suffer the whole church of England to perish in the storm. Roger of Worcester would not venture to give an advice in this case; for, if he should assert that a prelate ought to succumb to a king, he would speak against his conscience; and, if he said the reverse, he might incur the risk of suspen-

sion, or banishment. The bishop of Ely had a stroke of palsy, and could not attend, which led William of Norwich to wish he had been screened by the same misfortune, as God, he thought, had sent his brother of Ely a very happy excuse. Under these difficulties Becket's first determination was to brave all his enemies; to trust for protection to the sacredness of his character, and identify his cause with that of religion. In performing mass, he took care that the whole service should pointedly bear upon the recent occurrences. He directed the introit to the communion to begin with these words, "Princes sat and spoke against me;" hoping that, in the passage appointed for the martyrdom of St Stephen, some resemblance might be traced to his own sufferings for righteousness' sake. From church he went to court, arrayed in his pontifical robes. As soon as he arrived within the palace-gate, he took the cross into his own hands, bore it aloft as his protection, and marched in that attitude into the royal apartments. The king was astonished at this parade, imagining he and his court were to be excommunicated, and sent some of the prelates to remonstrate with him on his audacious behaviour. On being reminded of his having subscribed the constitutions of Clarendon, and of his present conduct being in violation of those laws, he replied, that though he had sworn to observe them "legally, with good faith, and without fraud or reservation," these words virtually implied a proviso for the rights of his order, which could never be relinquished by oaths or engagements. If he and they had erred in resigning their ecclesiastical privileges, the best atonement they could make, he said, was to retract their consent, which, in such a case, could never be obligatory. But the bishops felt no disposition to recant, and told him, that though they had hitherto acknowledged and obeyed him as their primate, they could no longer consider him under that character, since he had so grossly failed in his duty to the king, and broken the laws he had sworn to observe. Henry had now succeeded beyond his wishes, and would probably have pushed matters to the utmost extremity against Becket, but that prelate gave him no leisure to conduct the prosecution. The earl of Leicester, in name of the barons, had charged him with high-treason in breaking the constitutions of Clarendon, and was preparing to pronounce sentence, when Becket rose and told them they were laymen, and had no authority to sit in judgment upon their archbishop; upon which he walked out of court without waiting to hear the sentence. His departure called forth reproaches of perjury and treason from some of the members; to these he replied, turning back with a stern look, that but for the restraints of his character, and his regard for religion, he would have disproved their calumnies and defended his honour with the sword.⁵ In this forlorn situation, deserted by his brethren, and finding all hopes of accommodation at an end, he privately withdrew from Northampton, and travelled on foot and in disguise to Lincoln, attended by only two servants. From that city he reached a small solitary island, where he remained three days; and thence, after travelling a week, he arrived at a small town, dependant on the church of Canterbury, where his extreme weariness obliged him to stop for some time, lying concealed in a chamber belonging to an

⁵ Gervase, 1369.—Diceto, 537.

ecclesiastic to whom he discovered himself. After a great deal of fatigue, he reached the coast, and getting on board a vessel, he arrived at Gravelines in Holland. His perils and misfortunes did not end with his escape. Upon his arrival in Flanders, not being willing to make himself known, he journeyed on foot through bad roads, and in a very rainy season, until his strength being quite spent, he fell to the ground and could walk no farther. His few attendants, with some difficulty, procured him a very bad horse, without bridle or saddle, upon which they threw their cloaks. In this plight he was met by some soldiers, who, having heard of his flight, asked him if he was not the archbishop of Canterbury? With great presence of mind he replied, "This is not the equipage of an archbishop;" upon which he was allowed to pass. At Gravelines the innkeeper where he lodged having also heard of his escape, and considering the manners and behaviour of his guest, imagined this must be the person, and immediately throwing himself at his feet, entreated his blessing. Becket being satisfied of the man's sincerity, disclosed himself without reserve, and was entertained by him with great respect and hospitality. Continuing his journey to St Omer, he there found an asylum in the monastery of St Britin, the abbot and the monks receiving him with the greatest affection.

The violence of persecution generally defeats its own purpose, and often turns the tide of public sympathy in favour of the oppressed. The English began to overlook the perfidy and ingratitude of Becket, and abroad he was honoured as a martyr. There were, besides, political reasons for the countenance and protection he met with on the continent. Philip, earl of Flanders, and Louis, king of France, jealous of the rising greatness of Henry, were well pleased to stir up disturbance in his government. They affected to pity the condition of the exiled primate. Louis invited him to fix his residence at Soissons, where he even honoured him with a visit, and offered him a maintenance suitable to his dignity. This latter proposal the archbishop declined, and, soon afterwards, repaired to Sens, where he had an interview with the pope, into whose hands, at a private audience, he resigned the see of Canterbury, alleging that his election was not canonical, but was immediately restored by his holiness, who promised to take care of him and his interests, and, by a bull, pretended to abrogate the sentence which the great council of England had passed against him. Meantime Henry, in revenge, proceeded to acts of extreme rigour against the obnoxious prelate. He immediately confiscated the revenues of his archbishopric; he sent embassies to the king of France and the earl of Flanders, to prevail with these princes not to afford Becket shelter in their dominions. But the attempt entirely failed. Louis was shocked when he heard the primate styled the late archbishop, and asked who had deposed him? "I am a king," said he, "no less than your master, and yet I have no authority to deprive the meanest clerk in my dominions." Moreover, he despatched his almoner to Sens, conjuring the pope, if he had any regard for the honour of the Catholic church, or the friendship and assistance of France, that he would do his utmost to protect Thomas of Canterbury against the tyrant of England. Not succeeding at the French court, Henry sent a magnificent embassy to the pope to explain the charges against the archbishop, and request his holiness to send legates over to England to effect, if

possible, an accommodation. Alexander gave this splendid retinue of bishops and nobles a cold reception, and allowed them to depart without any satisfactory answer. Henry was exceedingly indignant to find his policy completely abortive. By a conduct at once arbitrary and cruel, he banished all the archbishop's relations and domestics to the number of four hundred, sparing neither age nor sex, for women and infants, the sick and the infirm, were involved in the proscription, and driven beyond sea.⁶ To aggravate their punishment, these unfortunate exiles were compelled to take oath that they would immediately join their patron in Normandy, where he then resided in the abbey of Pontigny. An order at the same time was published in England, forbidding all persons to correspond with Becket, or send him money, or so much as pray for him in the churches. This rigour, intended to reduce the refractory primate sooner to necessity, lost its effect; the pope absolved the refugees from their oath, and got them comfortably distributed among the convents in France and Flanders. Becket himself was enabled to live in great splendour, in the convent of Pontigny, partly from a pension granted him on the revenues of that abbey, and partly from considerable remittances made him by the French king. He even ventured to expostulate with Henry in a letter which he wrote, reminding him that kings had no authority but what they received from the church; urging him as he valued the interests of his own soul, not to infringe the rights he had sworn at his coronation to defend; and threatening him with divine vengeance unless he made instant restitution of the castles, townships and manors which had been violently taken from his clerks and tenants. In another epistle to the bishops of England, he complained of their not taking part with him against the wicked, as seeking to please men rather than serve the church of God. He acquainted them that the pope had annulled the constitutions of Clarendon, and released them from their obligation to observe those unrighteous laws. In order to heighten the odium against his persecutors, he took care to proclaim everywhere the wrongs which he had suffered; he compared himself to Christ, who had been condemned by a lay tribunal; and that he was crucified afresh in the oppressions under which his church still laboured; he took it for granted, as a point incontestable, that his cause was the cause of God; he claimed the exercise of discipline and correction, as being the spiritual father both of the king and the people of England, and inveighed against the absurdity of inverting this relationship by allowing the son to chastise his own parent. In virtue of this assumed prerogative, he issued out anathemas against various persons who had opposed or violated the rights of the church; some were excommunicated for accepting preferments, or drawing the revenues of their livings without his authority, and others for having been concerned in writing the 'unreasonable constitutions.' The king's chief ministers were excommunicated by name; and the spiritual thunder was suspended over the head of Henry himself. "As to the person of our sovereign lord the king," says he, "we have hitherto forborne to exert any censure, hoping that time and the grace of God might bring him to recollection and repentance; though, unless he quickly retrieve his wrong steps, we shall be forced to make use of our authority against him too."

⁶ Ep. S. Thom. i. 14, 15, 16, 23.—Hoved. 284.

Perhaps Becket was instigated to assume this tone of defiance by the turn which matters had taken at Rome in favour of Alexander, who, after a long exile, had returned to his capital. The breach between Henry and the apostolic see was as wide as ever, and he took care to make provisions against the impending rupture. He issued orders to his justiciaries, forbidding, under severe penalties, all appeals to the pope or archbishop, prohibiting any one to receive mandates from them, or apply, in any case, to their authority. He suspended the payment of 'Peter's pence,' and made advances towards an alliance with the emperor Barbarossa, who had espoused the cause of the arch pope, Pascal III., hoping by these expedients to terrify the pontiff from proceeding to extremities against him. He wrote also to the general chapter of the Cistercians, expressing his displeasure at their entertaining Becket, and threatening to seize all their estates in his dominions unless they drove him from the abbey of Pontigny. Upon this threat the primate withdrew to Sens, and thence, at the king of France's recommendation, to the convent of St Columba, where he remained four years. Both the contending parties, by their violent proceedings, had injured rather than benefited their cause. The letters and excommunications of Becket, so far from serving his interest, had exasperated the minds of many against him; while Henry had reduced himself to the unhappy situation of having thrown away the only spiritual weapon that could finally decide this controversy. His ministers and clergy were underlying the ban of the church, and there was no other expedient he could employ for releasing them from this terrible censure but by appealing to the pope; an authority which he had himself prohibited them to acknowledge, or apply to in any case whatever, under pain of treason. The bishops of the province of Canterbury wrote to their primate, entreating him to abate somewhat of his obstinacy, and endeavoured to open a way for a reconciliation. They expressed their displeasure at his having threatened the king with the censures of the church, a measure more likely to inflame than heal the quarrel between them; they implored him rather to try the effects of patience and humility, and throw himself on his majesty's clemency, who had been a bountiful patron to him in raising him from such slender beginnings to the highest dignity in the realm. They ventured to suggest, that unless concessions were made, it might endanger the pope's jurisdiction, and withdraw the kingdom of England from his communion; and to prevent these unfortunate consequences they were willing once more to appeal to the court of Rome.⁷ Becket in reply stated his surprise at the unfriendly and satirical style of their epistle, reproved them for charging him with ingratitude, and upbraiding him with the meanness of his birth and original station; but as for yielding, or submitting, it was the first time he had heard that inferiors had any authority over their superiors, or suffragans to be judges of their metropolitans; lastly, he had resolved with the apostle, that 'neither life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor any other creature,' should separate him from his duty, and he desires the bishops to pray for him that his constancy might not sink under such accumulated afflictions. But he did more than re-monstrate, he had obtained from the pope a legantine commission over

⁷ Ep. i. 126.

England, in virtue of which, he summoned the bishops of Salisbury and others to attend him under pain of excommunication, and ordered that the ecclesiastics sequestered on his account should be restored in two months to all their benefices.⁸ But the king's agent with the pope, John of Oxford, had the address to procure orders for the suspending of this sentence; and he gave his holiness such hopes of a speedy reconciliation between the parties, that two legates were despatched to Normandy, where Henry then was, to bring the dispute to a final adjustment. Matters however were not ripe for an accommodation. Henry required that all the constitutions of Clarendon should be ratified; while Becket insisted that, previous to any agreement, he and his adherents should be restored to their possessions. As the legates had no power to pronounce a definitive sentence on either side, the present negotiation came to nothing.

In 1167, and the two following years, the negotiations were renewed, but all attempts at reconciliation proved ineffectual. At an interview between Louis and Henry, at Montmirail in Champagne, Becket was urged to make his submission. A rumour had been spread that the English monarch intended to undertake a crusade, provided the affairs of the church were settled to his satisfaction. The prospect of this expedition made the pope press an accommodation, and the archbishop seemed not unwilling to comply. He would, however, agree to no arrangement, without a stipulation that nothing should be done inconsistent with the honour of God. Henry was enraged at this clause of reservation, and observed to the king of France, that it virtually rendered void the whole proceedings, since whatever Becket did not relish he would be sure to pronounce contrary to the honour of God. "However," added Henry, "to show my inclination to compromise matters, I will make him this proposition. There have been many kings of England, some greater, and some inferior to myself; there have been also many great and holy men in the see of Canterbury. Let Becket, therefore, but pay me the same regard, and own my authority so far as the greatest of his predecessors owned that of the least of mine, and I am satisfied. And as I never forced him out of England, I give him leave to return at his pleasure; and am willing he should enjoy his archbishopric, with as ample privileges as any of his predecessors." Upon this the whole audience declared aloud that the king had gone far enough in his condescensions. Louis was so struck with this state of the case, that he could not forbear condemning the primate, and withdrawing his friendship from him, and even withholding his pension. But neither force nor argument could prevail with Becket, and the conference terminated without effect. The bigotry of Louis and his inveterate animosity against England, soon restored the archbishop to the French king's favour. Becket knew well how to excite the public sympathy, and when he found himself deprived of the means of supporting himself and his family, he resolved to dismiss his retinue and go a-begging. Before, however, he had carried this whim into practice, Louis unexpectedly requested his attendance. A fit of penitence had seized him, and throwing himself in tears at the archbishop's feet, "My Lord," he exclaimed, "you are the only discerning person; nobody's eyes

⁸ Ep. i. 96. — Gervase, 1400.

have been open on this occasion but yours. As for us who advised you to wave the mention of 'God's honour,' to honour a mortal man, we were all no better than stock blind. Father, I am sorry for what I have done; I entreat your pardon, and as for my person and kingdom they are both at your service." Whether this contrition was real or political may be uncertain; Becket however recovered his pension, and the favour of the French court.

A third negotiation was attempted in 1169, but with no better success than the two former. On this occasion the king had relaxed so far as to consent without any clause of reservation, that the archbishop should enjoy his see, with the privileges of his predecessors, and offered a thousand marks to defray the expense of his voyage back to England. Becket insisted that he had received damage to the value of thirty thousand marks, and that without restitution, the guilt of injustice would still remain. But at the instance of Louis and the nobility of both kingdoms, he dropped his claim to the money, and accepted the king's offer. The terms of accommodation seemed now adjusted, and Becket desired no more than that the king would do him the honour of the customary salute, as a mark of his favour and friendship. This was fatal to the whole arrangement. Henry observed he should willingly have gratified Becket in this request, had he not once sworn in a passion never to salute the archbishop on the cheek; but he averred that the omission of this ceremony should imply no ill-will on his part. The primate, suspecting some unfriendly reserve, refused to accept the articles without the kiss of peace, nor would the king yield the point although the pope to obviate the difficulty, offered to grant him a dispensation from his vow. This treaty having fallen to the ground, Henry, fearing lest Becket should procure an interdict to be laid on his dominions, ordered all his English subjects above fifteen years of age to take an oath by which they renounced the authority both of the archbishop and the pope. Most of the laity complied with this test of their loyalty; but few of the clergy could be induced to subscribe it. About the same time the king having caused his son the young prince, to be crowned at Westminster, where the ceremony was performed by Roger, archbishop of York, without any protestation to save the privileges of the see of Canterbury to which that office of right belonged. Becket complained of this injury to the pope who empowered him to suspend the archbishop of York, and to excommunicate the bishops that assisted him. In this extreme, matters could not long continue. The pope sent two commissions to England to attempt a compromise; while Henry, equally anxious to put a period to the contest, set out for Normandy, where he was waited upon by Becket at the confines of Maine. Here an accommodation was at last brought about, A. D. 1170, and all differences amicably adjusted. Becket was allowed to return to England in terms that may be considered both honourable and advantageous. He was not required to give up any rights of the church, or resign any of those pretensions which had been the original grounds of the controversy. It was agreed that he and his adherents should, without making farther submission, be restored to all their livings; and that even the possessors of such benefices as depended on the see of Canterbury, and had been filled during the primate's absence, should be expelled, and Becket have liberty to supply the vacancies.

In return for concessions which trenched so deeply on the honour and dignity of the crown, Henry reaped only the advantage of seeing his ministers absolved from the sentence of excommunication pronounced against them, and of preventing the interdict which, if these hard conditions had not been complied with, was ready to be laid on his kingdom. It was obviously the dread of this event that induced him to submit to terms so dishonourable, and so anxious was he to conciliate Becket, that he took the most extraordinary steps to flatter his vanity; and even on one occasion humiliated himself so far as to hold the stirrup of the haughty prelate's horse while he twice mounted and dismounted.

Becket now took leave of France on his return to England. On his approaching the coast, the archbishop of York and the rest of the suspended prelates ignorant of the compromise, and afraid lest he should publish the pope's sentence against them, endeavoured to oppose his landing by stationing military guards at the different ports.⁹ But on being informed that a reconciliation had taken place, they laid down their arms. Becket, elated with his victory, proceeded in the most ostentatious manner to take possession of his diocese. In Rochester and all the towns through which he passed, he was received with the shouts and acclamations of the populace. As he approached Southwark, the clergy, the laity, men of all ranks and ages, came forth to meet him, and celebrated with hymns of joy his triumphant entrance. And though he was commanded by the young prince, whose order to absolve the suspended and excommunicated bishops he had refused to obey, to return immediately to his diocese, he found that he was not mistaken when he reckoned upon the highest veneration of the public towards his person and his dignity. But instead of a temperate and lenient exercise of his authority, he proceeded with the more courage to dart his spiritual thunders, and issued the censures of the church against all who had assisted at the coronation of the young prince, or been active in the late persecution of the exiled clergy. These violent measures exasperated Henry more and more, but he hoped by forbearance and delay on his part to soften the rigour of Becket's opposition, especially since his pride was fully gratified by his restoration. Becket, however, was resolved to push to the utmost the advantages which his present victory gave, and to disconcert the cautious measures of the king by the vehemence and rigour of his own conduct. Assured of support from Rome, he was little intimidated by dangers which his courage taught him to despise, and which, even if attended with the most fatal consequences, would serve only to justify his ambition and thirst of glory. His refusal to absolve the archbishop of York, induced that prelate, and two others, to lay their complaints before Henry, then residing at Baieux in Normandy. The king foresaw that his whole plan of operations was overthrown, and that the dangerous contest between the civil and ecclesiastical powers must come to an immediate and decisive issue. In his indignation, he could not help exclaiming with great warmth, "That he was an unhappy prince, who maintained a number of lazy insignificant persons about him, none of whom had gratitude or spirit enough to revenge him on a single insolent prelate who gave him such disturbance." These words were heard by four

⁹ Stephan. 73.—Ep. v. 73.

gentlemen of the court, Reginald Fitz-Urse, William de Tracy, Richard Britow, and Hugh de Morville, and taking them as a hint, they immediately formed a design against the archbishop's life.

Before leaving France, some expressions which they had dropt gave a suspicion of their design, and the king despatched a messenger after them, charging them to attempt nothing against the person of the primate; but these orders arrived too late to prevent the fatal deed. The four assassins, though they took different roads to England, arrived almost at the same time (29th December, 1170) at Saltwoode, near Canterbury;¹⁰ and being there joined by some assistants, they proceeded in great haste to the archiepiscopal palace and found the primate but very slenderly attended. They told him they came from the king to command him to absolve the bishops under censure. Becket replied that it was not within the authority of an inferior jurisdiction to set aside the sentence of a superior court, and that the pope's censure could not be reversed but by the pope himself. This answer not satisfying them, they charged the monks of Canterbury, in the king's name, to keep the archbishop safe, that he might be forthcoming, and then departed with a menacing air. The same evening they returned to the palace, and leaving a body of soldiers in the court-yard, rushed into the cloister with their swords drawn, and from thence into the church, where the archbishop was at vespers. "Where is the traitor?" they exclaimed, and nobody answering, they asked for the archbishop; upon which Becket moved towards them, without showing the least sign of fear, and told them he was the person. When one of them threatened him with death, he coolly answered he was prepared to die for the cause of God, and in defence of the rights of the church; "but," added he, "if you must have my life, I charge you not to hurt any other person here, either clergy or laity, for none of them have any concern in the late transactions." The assassins immediately laid hands on him, and offered to drag him out of the church, but finding it could not be done without difficulty, they despatched him on the spot. He made no resistance, and though his head was cloven with several wounds, he never gave a groan nor offered to avoid a stroke.¹¹ He was only in the fifty-third year of his age. One of his attendants, a clergyman belonging to the cathedral, having interposed his arm to ward off a blow, had it nearly cut off. The murderers afraid they had gone too far, durst not return to the king's court in Normandy, but rather chose to withdraw to Knaresborough, to a tower belonging to Hugh de Morville. Here they continued till they found themselves the aversion and contempt of the country, for nobody would hold conversation or eat or drink with them. Justice, we should have thought, would soon have overtaken their crime, but there was no law to inflict capital punishment on any person who had killed a member of the church, the clergy having exempted themselves from the king's jurisdiction. Tired of solitude and public neglect, they took a journey to Rome, and being admitted to penance, they went to Jerusalem, where they spent the remainder of their lives in penitential austerities. The body of Becket, which the assassins had hesitated whether to throw into the sea or cut into small pieces, was buried by the monks and friars in a vault of the cathedral.

¹⁰ Gervase, 1414.

¹¹ Stephan. 81—88.—*Quadrilogus*, III. 13—18.—Gervase, 1415.

The intelligence of the murder threw Henry into the greatest consternation. He was fully sensible of the dangerous consequences which he had reason to apprehend from so unexpected an event, and as it was extremely his interest to clear himself from all suspicion, he took no care to conceal the depth of his affliction. He shut himself up in his chamber, suspended all intercourse with his servants, and even refused, during three days, food or sustenance of any kind. But the point of chief importance was to convince the pope of his innocence, and for this purpose he immediately despatched an embassy to Rome. Alexander was highly incensed at the king, and stimulated to revenge by the letters he received from the partisans of Becket. The king of France wrote to his holiness 'to draw St Peter's sword against Henry, and to study some new and exemplary justice;' others were equally urgent, and moved for an interdict upon his dominions. But the ambassadors found means so far to appease the pontiff, as to avoid the terrible blow of excommunication, having made oath before the whole consistory that their prince was innocent, and that he would stand to the pope's judgment in the affair, and make every submission that should be required of him. Accordingly, on returning to England next year, Henry repaired to Canterbury where he did penance, and underwent a voluntary discipline in testimony of his regret for the murder. When he came within sight of the cathedral where the body was buried, he alighted from his horse and walked barefoot in the habit of a pilgrim till he came to Becket's tomb, where, after he had prostrated himself and prayed for a considerable time, he submitted to be scourged by the monks, and passed all that day and night kneeling on the bare stones without any refreshment. For nearly a year after Becket's death, all divine offices ceased in the church of Canterbury until it was re-consecrated by order of the pope. In 1173 he was canonized by a papal bull, and a particular collect was appointed to be used in all the churches within the province for expiating the guilt of the murder of that 'blessed martyr and bishop.'¹² In 1221, the body was taken up in presence of Henry III. and a great concourse of the nobility and others, and deposited in a rich shrine on the east side of the church, erected at the expense of Stephen Langton, then archbishop of Canterbury. His shrine was visited from all parts, and enriched with the most costly offerings. Pilgrimages were performed to obtain his intercession with heaven, and in one year it was computed that above 100,000 of these pious devotees visited Canterbury. The miracles said to have been wrought at his tomb were so numerous, that Gervase of Canterbury tells us there were two large volumes filled with them kept in that church.

A character so extraordinary was sure to be variously represented according as the portrait was drawn by friends or enemies. Most contemporary writers justify his conduct throughout and make him a glorious martyr. The clergy extolled the greatness of his sanctity and his merits, exalting him far above all the 'cloud of witnesses' who had by their blood cemented the fabric of the church. Later writers, however, have set his character in a very disadvantageous light, accusing him of insolence, bigotry, perjury and treason, both against his king and his country. In the main ground of the quarrel, that of requiring

¹² Forty-eight years after his decease, the doctors of the university of Paris had a warm dispute whether he was saved or damned.

ecclesiastics, guilty of felony, murder, or other high crimes, to be punished directly by the secular magistrate, it cannot be denied that the English constitution afforded several precedents in favour of the archbishop's opinion. Alfred executed a judge for trying and condemning a clerk; and in the contest between Anselm and William, it was taken for granted that none but the pope had a right to try the archbishop. But allowing all this, the exemption of clerks from the civil courts was no right inseparable from their order, but only a privilege granted them by the crown, and therefore revokable by the same authority. From all which it follows, that whatever may be said of Becket's opposition at first, yet after the parliament of Clarendon had enacted, "that clerks should be tried in the king's courts," he ought not to have insisted upon the prior exemption. As to the other parts of his conduct, his first signing and then renouncing the articles of Clarendon,—his quitting the kingdom without the royal permission,—his refusing to return to his see upon the best terms enjoyed by any of his predecessors,—his breaking off the accommodation only for being denied the kiss of peace,—and similar instances of violence and obstinate inflexibility,—these can neither be palliated nor defended. That he was a man of great talents and invincible courage is incontestable, but he was of a most ambitious and turbulent spirit, excessively passionate, haughty and ostentatious, ungrateful in his disposition, and implacable in his resentments. From the cunning and falsehood he occasionally evinced, as well as from his sudden change of life from gaiety and splendour to retirement and abstinence, we can hardly help suspecting that he only became the champion of the church from an ambitious desire of sharing its power,—a power more independent of court favour than the chancellorship, and therefore more agreeable to the pride and haughtiness of his temper. He certainly would have been the most extraordinary person of his age had he been allowed to remain in his first station, and had he directed the vehemence of his character to the support of law and justice, instead of being engaged by the prejudices of the times to sacrifice all private obligations and public connexions to duties which he imagined or represented as superior to every civil and political consideration. As to the endless panegyrics on his virtues, it is, indeed, a mortifying reflection to those who are actuated by the love of fame, that the wisest legislator and most exalted genius that ever reformed or enlightened the world, can never expect such eulogies as has been conferred on pretended saints, whose whole conduct was probably to the last degree odious or contemptible, and whose industry was entirely directed to the pursuit of objects pernicious to mankind. Becket was also the subject of poetical legends; a work entitled, 'Lives of the Saints,' in verse, contains an account of his martyrdom and translation. If this author is to be credited, the archbishop was a scholar and had his palace filled with literary men, who passed their time there in reading, disputing, and deciding important questions of the state.

Archbishop Langton.

DIED A. D. 1228.

STEPHEN DE LANGTON, archbishop of Canterbury, in the reigns of John and Henry, and one of the ablest men who ever filled the primacy of England, was educated at the university of Paris, where he afterwards taught divinity, and prelected upon the sacred writings with much reputation. After some years spent in this way, he was chosen chancellor of the university, canon of Paris, and dean of Rheims. His reputation having reached Rome, he was sent for by Pope Innocent III., who marked his sense of his merits by bestowing upon him the dignity of a cardinal with the title of St Chrysagonus.

We have adverted in our notice of king John, to the contest which arose betwixt the monks of Canterbury and the suffragan prelates of that diocese upon the occasion of electing a successor to Archbishop Hubert. On the cause being carried to Rome, on the mutual appeal of both parties, the pope decided against the claims of both pretenders to the primacy, and ordered the monks who had been deputed to maintain the cause of their brethren to elect Langton. Innocent had reason to suppose that the choice would not be disagreeable to the king of England, who had frequently written to the cardinal in terms of the highest esteem; but no answer having been returned by the envoys whom he sent to England to solicit John's approbation of the prelate-elect, he proceeded to consecrate him at Viterbo, on the 27th of June, 1207.¹

On the arrival of the bull intimating the election and consecration of the cardinal, John, who had favoured the elevation of John de Gracy, bishop of Norwich, to the vacant primacy, was inflamed with rage, and vented his passion on the monks of Christchurch, whom he drove into exile. He then wrote a spirited and angry letter to the pope, in which he accused the holy father of injustice and presumption in raising a stranger to the highest dignity in his kingdom without his knowledge or consent. He reminded his holiness of the extent of revenue which he drew from England; and assured him that unless he immediately repaired the injury he had done him, he would break off all communication betwixt his kingdom and Rome.² To this letter Innocent immediately returned a long answer, in which he exhorted the king not to oppose God and the church any longer, and plainly told him that if he persisted in his obstinacy, he would plunge himself into inextricable difficulties, and would at length be crushed by a power, which no one could hope to resist with success. The quarrel had now become a trial of strength between the power of the king and that of the pontiff. John remained firm even under the dreadful threat of interdiction, which was at last pronounced against him, as already related. While the king continued to hold out against the head of the church, Langton abode at Pontigny in France, whither several of the English bishops hastened to pay their submissions to him as their primate. The king ultimately solicited a conference with Langton at Dover, and offered to acknowledge him as primate, but the parties could not agree as to the article

¹ M. Paris, 155.

² M. Paris, 157.

of reparation and restitution to the clergy, and the negotiations were finally broke off. The archbishop and prelates now united in a representation to the pope, in which they described their own wrongs in forcible terms, and urged the necessity of adopting strong measures against John. Innocent, who required little persuasion on this point, immediately pronounced sentence of deposition against John, and absolved his vassals from their oaths of fealty.³

The mission of Pandolf, as pope's legate, and the formidable preparations made by the king of France to put in execution the pope's sentence of deposition, at last overcame John's obstinacy; and in July 1213, the prelates who had abandoned their country during the sovereign's contumacy, returned in great triumph to England with Langton at their head. The king met them at Winchester; and Langton publicly revoked the sentence of excommunication which had been pronounced against him;⁴ but the interdict was continued until removed by the pope's legate with great solemnity, in the cathedral of St Paul's, on the 29th of June 1214.

Langton's first interference in political affairs places his character in a most respectable light. The barons were now beginning to demand the restoration of their privileges, and the revival of the ancient charters; and with this view, instead of obeying the call of their sovereign to accompany him in an expedition against France, had assembled in council at St Albans, and issued their resolutions in the form of royal proclamations. John determined to punish their disobedience by military execution; and had advanced as far as Northampton for this purpose, when he was overtaken by the primate, who reminded him that it was the right of the accused to be tried and judged by their peers. "Rule you the church, and leave me to govern the state," was the answer of the king, who continued his march to Nottingham, where he was again assailed by Langton, who at last, by threatening him with excommunication, succeeded in diverting him from his rash purpose. Three weeks after this the barons again met at St Paul's in London, when Langton read to them the charter of Henry I., and commenting on its provisions, showed them that its enforcement would still secure their liberties. The barons responded to the primate's address with loud acclamations and expressions of their determination to be guided by his advice; and the archbishop, taking advantage of their enthusiasm, administered to them an oath, by which they bound themselves to support each other, and to conquer or die in the defence of their liberties.⁵

From the first moment of his engaging in politics, Langton attached himself to the popular side, and evinced the most enlightened and zealous regard for the liberties of his country. His exertions were mainly instrumental in procuring the great charter at Runnymede, while at the same time, he not unfrequently interfered to moderate the violence of the more impetuous and headstrong barons, and showed that he was friendly to the legal prerogatives of the crown. His patriotic conduct gave so much offence to the pope, that, in 1215, he laid him under a sentence of suspension, and reversed the election of his brother

³ M. Paris, 161.⁴ Ep. Innocent, p. 827.⁵ Arn. Waver. 178.

Simon, who had been chosen archbishop of York. Yet, in the following year, we find Langton assisting at a general council held at Rome.

In the succeeding reign he recovered his rank and authority, and from this period he chiefly confined his attention to ecclesiastical concerns. In the 6th year of Henry's reign, he held a synod at Oxford, at which he published a new code of discipline consisting of forty-two canons, one of which, prohibiting clergymen from publicly keeping concubines, sufficiently illustrates the manners of the age. In this synod, a clergyman in deacon's orders was convicted of apostasy, delivered to the secular power, and condemned to be burnt. He had suffered himself to be circumcised that he might marry a Jewish woman.⁶ At the call of the barons, in 1213, Langton readily placed himself again at their head, and demanded an audience of Henry, to obtain a confirmation from him of the charters. He died on the 9th of July, 1228.

Langton was a learned and polished writer. His works have not been collected, but they are said to exist in MS. in various public libraries. He wrote commentaries upon the greater part of the books of Scripture, into which he contrived to infuse a large portion of the fashionable dialectics of his age. He is said to have first divided the Bible into chapters.⁷ M. de la Rue, in his dissertation on the Anglo-Norman poets of the 13th century,⁸ has placed Langton at the top of the list, and has quoted the first proof of his poetical talents from the stanza of a song introduced in one of his sermons upon the holy virgin. It appears that whole discourses in French verse were then not unusual, which is one of the strongest proofs that could be offered of the very general taste for French poetry, and familiar acquaintance with the language, which must have pervaded all ranks of people in England at that time. In the same MS. which contains this sermon, are two other pieces which have been ascribed to the archbishop. The first is a theological drama, in which Truth, Justice, Mercy, and Peace, debate among themselves what ought to be the fate of Adam after his fall. The second is a canticle on the passion of Jesus Christ, in 123 stanzas, making more than 600 verses. M. de la Rue suggests, that the 10th verse of the 80th psalm, furnished the poet with the idea of the former of these pieces, and says that he has worked it up with equal taste and delicacy.

Bishop Grosseteste.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1175.—DIED A. D. 1253.

ROBERT GROSSETESTE, one of the lights of a dark age, was born of obscure parentage at Shadbrook in Suffolk, about the year 1175. He studied at Oxford, where he acquired a knowledge of Greek, and was thus enabled to grapple with Aristotle in the original, whose works had been chiefly read in translation. Here also Grosseteste mastered the Hebrew. He then visited Paris, where he added to Greek and Hebrew the knowledge of the French tongue. He at the same time prosecuted, with the most indefatigable industry, the study of philosophy

⁶ Vikes, 39. ⁷ Knyghton, apud Script. col. 2430. ⁸ See Archæologia, vol. xiii. art. 23.

and theology; and some estimate may be formed of the extent of his attainments from the fact that they were attributed to magic. This accusation, as is well known, was not unusually brought against men of profound knowledge, whose erudition seemed to wondering ignorance impossible to be attained in any other way. On his return to Oxford, Grosseteste became the first lecturer in the Franciscan school in that university.

So honest and so undisguised was his opposition to ecclesiastical abuses, that he was once actually excommunicated by the convent of Canterbury. This sentence he treated with the contempt it deserved; it neither abated his zeal, nor shook his perseverance. Though the hypocrisy of the Dominican and Franciscan friars imposed upon him for a time, he at length began to detect it, and became convinced that ecclesiastics might be guilty of other crimes besides those of licentiousness, and be destitute of humility and piety, though clothed in sackcloth, and ostentatious of their poverty. In the year 1247, two Franciscans, commissioned by the pope, and furnished with regular credentials, were sent into England to extort money. They modestly demanded of Grosseteste 6000 merks as the quota for the see of Lincoln. He did not hesitate to refuse compliance with this insolent demand, and told his visitors, though agents from the vatican, that it was as dishonourable to require such a sum, as it would be impracticable to levy it. In 1248, after much trouble he obtained, from Pope Innocent IV., leave to reform the religious orders.¹ Thus authorized, he proceeded to institute a rigorous investigation of the revenues of the religious houses, the rents of which he resolved to take into his own hands, intending to distribute them in a more beneficial manner. The monks, as usual, resisted such an unprofitable innovation; and as they appealed to the pope, Grosseteste was compelled to repair to Lyons to meet him. The pontiff not only decided against the English prelate, but added insult to injustice. Grosseteste warmly retorted, almost accused the papal court of bribery, and in a remonstrance which he left behind him, fully exposed its abominable abuses. He particularly inveighed against the infamous *non obstante* clause—that ingenious expedient by which his holiness was enabled to dispense with oaths and promises, customs and statutes,—all that is sacred in the Word of God, or the laws of man. At this period, the ascendancy which the court of Rome had attained over the English church was unbounded, and was the necessary consequence of the concessions made by King John and Henry the Third. No stronger proof of the extent of this usurpation can be imagined, than the fact, that many of the richest benefices in England were conferred upon Italians—men absolutely ignorant of our language—favourites, and in some cases, relations of the pope. Grosseteste, incensed at such a flagrant abuse of power, has been known, upon some occasions, to throw from him in scorn the bulls commanding this shameless appropriation of church property. At length the pope and the bishops came to an open rupture. Grosseteste, it seems, had received an order from the pontiff to promote his nephew, then a mere boy, to the first vacant canonry in the cathedral of Lincoln. The pope apparently suspecting opposition from his refractory servant, enjoined his agents, by

¹ Gross. Ep. 113, 114.

the *non obstante* clause, to see this arrangement effected. To this bare-faced attempt Grosseteste offered the most spirited resistance. He immediately wrote to the pope. This letter contained an explicit refusal to comply with this request, couched in the strongest terms, and a cutting reproof of the flagitious conduct of the pontiff. This bold reply threw the pope into a paroxysm of rage. The cardinals endeavoured to soothe him, though, it must be confessed, their topics of consolation were rather oddly chosen. They frankly assured him that he would get nothing by quarrelling with the English prelate; that for learning, piety, honesty and worth, he had not his match in Christendom; and that all he had asserted was substantially true. The pope, however, was not to be reasoned with, especially when arguments were so humbling; and proceeded, therefore, to launch his thunderbolts against the bishop, but they harmed him not. He viewed with pity or contempt the impotent malice of the enraged pontiff, and retained quiet possession of his dignity.

In the summer of 1253, he was taken ill at Buckden. From this attack he did not recover. He lingered till October 9th of the same year, when he died.² The corpse was taken to Lincoln. On his death-bed, he displayed the same unshaken courage and fortitude which had distinguished his whole life. Conscious of his own integrity in his disputes with the pope, he retracted not a syllable of what he had said,—he repented of nothing he had done,—nay, he is reported in his last moments to have inveighed in the strongest terms against the gigantic abuses of the papacy, and even to have denounced the pope as Antichrist.³ The pope was of course rejoiced to hear of his death, and, with the characteristic malice of a little mind, ordered his remains to be disinterred and burnt. The letter, however, containing this order was not sent. It is needless to say that Grosseteste never arrived at the honours of canonization. But he needed no such ‘damning’ honours; posterity has spontaneously done him that justice which Rome denied him. Grosseteste did not surpass the ecclesiastics of his age more in judgment, piety and integrity than in learning. Old age found the ardour with which he had sought knowledge when a youth, still undiminished. His acquaintance with all branches of learning was very extensive; but his favourite pursuits seem to have been logic, philosophy and theology. He also possessed—what was, alas! a rare attainment in those days,—an accurate knowledge of the scriptures. His writings are very voluminous. The mere catalogue occupies not less than twenty-five quarto pages in Dr Pegge’s life of him.

Of Bishop Grosseteste it is impossible to form a correct opinion without carefully remembering the circumstances of the age in which he lived, and estimating the various influences which concurred in the formation of his character. That he held many absurd dogmas of the church of Rome,—that he saw not a tenth part of the enormities of that system against which he was partially opposed, will not appear wonderful to any one who reflects how slowly the human mind extricates itself from error—especially religious error—and how gradually it arrives at truth. That Grosseteste saw more than could have been reasonably expected in such circumstances, and in such an age, will be

² M. Paris, 586.

Ib.

readily admitted by every candid mind ; and, could he have added to the zeal of his youth the knowledge and experience of his maturer years, he would have advanced much farther. At one time his opinions on the subject of the papal prerogative were almost as absurd as those he entertained concerning the leading dogmas of the Romish superstition. The former he lived to correct in a great measure ; a few more years would have done the same for the latter.

III. LITERARY SERIES.

William of Malmesbury.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1095.—DIED CIRC. A. D. 1143.

THE most valuable part of the literature of the Anglo-Norman period, is unquestionably the extensive series of national annals, chronicles, and histories, composed by monkish writers. It is true, that to enlarged and philosophical views of history, these works possess no claim whatever, and that even in respect of literary talent they cannot be ranked very high ; they are also deeply tinged with the superstitious credulity of the times ; but then, to use the words of Turner, “such a series of regular chronology and true incident,—such faithful, clear, and ample materials for authentic history,—had scarcely appeared before : nothing could be more contemptible as compositions,—nothing could be more satisfactory as authorities.” A few brief sketches of the principal of these chroniclers, with one or two other notices, is all that our limits will permit us to attempt.

An interval of upwards of two centuries intervened from the introduction of Christianity into England, before any national historian arose. Anglo-Saxon history, properly so called, begins with Gildas, surnamed the Wise, who seems to have written before the commencement of the 6th century. Nennius has been placed by some writers in the same era with Gildas, but he wrote in the year 858. From Gildas, until the 8th century, the only notices of English history we possess are contained in the odes of the British bards. The first Anglo-Saxon chronicle now extant, to which any certain date or certain origin can be ascribed, is the ecclesiastical history of Bede, already noticed. It is impossible to pronounce with certainty where the existing text of the Saxon chronicle was first formed. Wheloc formed the text which he has printed under the title of ‘*Chronologia Saxonica*,’ from two manuscripts, one in the Bennet library, and one in the Cottonian library, both of which may be referred to the 9th century. It was continued from time to time, by various writers, to the reign of Henry II. In the history compiled by Ethelweard, we have a very abridged translation of the Saxon chronicle. Florence of Worcester, who wrote in the reign of Henry I., translates the Saxon chronicle closely to the period where the chronicle of Asser begins ; he then transcribes the work of the British prelate, but returns to the Saxon

chronicle as soon as Asser concludes. His contemporary, Simeon of Durham, commences with the death of Bede, and carries on till the death of Stephen. Henry, archdeacon of Huntingdon, divides his history into books, and treats distinctly of each of the kingdoms of the heptarchy until their union under Edgar. He states that, taking Bede as his basis, he added much from other sources, and borrowed from the chronicles which he found in ancient libraries. The historical writings of Ingulphus, abbot of Croyland, are now, with apparent reason, regarded as monkish forgeries.

William of Malmesbury, one of the fathers of English history, flourished during the first half of the twelfth century. He was born in Somersetshire, and from that circumstance is called also occasionally *Somersetanus*, but the date of his birth is uncertain. Mr Sharpe, the translator of his 'History,' thinks it probable that he was born about the year 1095. If this date is any thing near the truth, it seems reasonable to extend the assigned date of his death, viz. 1143, a few years at least, otherwise he must have died at the early age of 48; and indeed when it is considered that he only completed the last of his historical pieces in 1142, and that he subsequently made several corrections upon it, it may fairly be presumed that he lived several years after this latter date. He was descended, he informs us, from Saxon and Norman parents. When a child he discovered a fondness for learning in which he was encouraged by his father; and while yet a boy, he was placed for his education in the monastery, from which he afterwards received his name, and in which he filled the office of librarian. Here, in addition to the study of the Latin language, he applied himself to logic, medicine, and ethics, but history soon became his favourite and almost engrossing study.

The manner in which he conceived and executed the idea of those historical works by which he is known, cannot be better described than in his own modest and simple terms, which we shall quote from Mr Sharpe's translation.¹ "When at my own expense," says he, "I had procured some historians of foreign nations, I proceeded, during my domestic leisure, to inquire if any thing concerning our own country could be found, worthy of handing down to posterity. Hence it arose, that, not content with the writings of ancient times, I began, myself, to compose; not indeed to display my learning—which is indeed comparatively nothing—but to bring to light events lying concealed in the confused mass of antiquity. In consequence, rejecting vague opinions, I have studiously sought for chronicles far and near, though I confess I have scarcely profited any thing by this industry. For perusing them all, I still remained poor in information; though I ceased not my researches as long as I could find any thing to read. However, what I have clearly ascertained concerning the four kingdoms I have inserted in my first book, in which I hope truth will find no cause to blush, though perhaps a degree of doubt may sometimes arise. I shall now trace the monarchy of the West-Saxon kingdom, through the line of successive princes, down to the coming of the Normans: which if any person will condescend to regard with complacency, let him in brotherly love observe the following rule: 'If before he knew only these things,

¹ London, 1815, 4to.

let him not be disgusted because I have inserted them; if he shall know more, let him not be angry that I have not spoken of them, but rather let him communicate his knowledge to me while I yet live, that, at least those events may appear in the margin of my history, which do not occur in the text."

To the resolution announced in this extract we are indebted for his valuable work '*De Regibus Anglorum*,' being a general history of England, in five books, commencing with the arrival of the Saxons in 449, and concluding with the 26th year of Henry I. To this work he subsequently added other two books of modern history, as he called it, in which the history of his country is carried down from 1126, to the escape of the empress Maud from Oxford, during the civil wars, in 1143. Both these performances were composed according to the universal fashion of the times, in Latin; and their author's Latinity is pure beyond that of most of his contemporaries. They were published in the original, in Sir Henry Saville's collection of historical writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, entitled '*Scriptores post Bedam*,' London, 1596; and also subsequently at Frankfort in 1601. Besides these, Malmesbury wrote a church-history in four books, and some Scriptural expositions, which are preserved in Gale's '*Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores*,' Oxford, 1684.

"Few historians," says Andrews,² "have been so highly and so deservedly praised as this modest friar." To patient and extensive research, he added the prime quality of an historian, veracity; and although he does not always avoid the marvellous, yet, considering the character of the age in which he lived, it would be doing him great injustice to represent him as a credulous author. Both Lyttleton and Hume have borne ample testimony to his worth as an historian, and the numerous references to his pages which occur in their writings, and in all our modern historians, furnish decisive proof of the value of his contributions to the historical literature of his country.

Robert Pullen.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1090.—DIED A. D. 1150.

ROBERT PULLEN, or WHITE, "whose memory," says honest John of Salisbury, "is pleasant to all good men, and whom the apostolic seat made a chancellor from a scholastic doctor,"¹ flourished in the 12th century, and distinguished himself as a zealous student and promoter of learning. Fuller reckons him an Oxfordshire man. In his youth he studied at Paris,² where he subsequently gave lectures in philosophy and theology to crowded audiences. About 1136, at the invitation of Asceline, bishop of Rochester, he returned to England, where his exertions mainly contributed to the restoration of that school of learning after it had been nearly ruined by the Danes. He is said to have prelected on the Scriptures and the works of Aristotle. Henry I. patronised him; and Asceline bestowed on him the archdeaconry of Rochester. After this he returned to Paris, where he filled the divinity chair in its then cele-

¹ Hist. of Great Britain, p. 230.

² Metalog. p. 746.

³ Simeon Dunelm. apud Decem. Script. col. 275.

brated university. His metropolitan recalled him from this employment; and on his manifesting some reluctance to obey the summons, ordered the revenues of his benefice to be sequestrated until he should present himself. The archdeacon appealed from his superior to the see of Rome, and sentence was pronounced in his favour. The fame of his great learning induced Pope Innocent II. to invite him to Rome, where he was received with great marks of favour. In 1144, Celestine II. created him cardinal, and Lucius II. afterwards made him chancellor of the Roman church. He was esteemed the most learned of all the college of cardinals. He died in 1150. The only work of his known to be now extant, is his 'Book of Sentences,' which was published at Paris in 1655. It contains a summary of Christian theology, and probably furnished the model for the more celebrated 'Sententiarum Liber,' of his successor Peter Lombard. Its most pleasing character is the deference it exhibits to the simple authority of scripture.³

John of Salisbury.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1116.—DIED A. D. 1182.

JOHN of Salisbury, one of the greatest ornaments of the 12th century, was born at Old Sarum—whence he derived the name of Sarisburiensis—about the year 1116. He received his early education in England, and went to the university of Paris for his further improvement, in 1136.¹ In this famous seat of learning he spent no fewer than twelve years, in attendance upon the lectures of Abelard, and other eminent scholars, and acquired an uncommon amount of knowledge for the time in which he lived, both in philosophy and letters. His poverty obliged him to have recourse to the usual shift of a poor student,—the preceptorship of his juniors; yet he managed to obtain for himself the most liberal education which Europe could afford, and to his knowledge of languages, added—what was exceedingly rare in such an age—some acquaintance with Greek and Hebrew. The account which he gives of his studies in his 'Metalogicus,' shows the laborious application with which the scholars of the middle ages pursued the knowledge they valued. He says that he first went to the Peripatetic school at Paris, where he studied logic. He then proceeded to dialectics under Master Alberic, whom he styles 'Opinatissimus Dialecticus.' He was two years with him, and Robert Metridensis, an Englishman. He next transferred himself to William De Conchia, a grammarian. After this he followed Richard, called the bishop, going over the quadrivium, and what he had learned from others with him. At this stage of his studies he also heard the German Harduin. He next revised his rhetoric with Peter Helias, and then resumed the study of logic with William of Soissons. Returning at the end of three years, he heard Master Gilbert prelect on logic and divinity, and from him proceeded to Robert Pullen and Simon Periacensis, under both of whom he studied theology. On returning to England, he embraced the

³ Dupin, cent. xii. cap. 15.

¹ Sarisburiensis. Metalog. lib. ii. c. 10

monastic life at Canterbury, but first studied the civil law under Vacarius, then teaching with great applause at Oxford,² and thus qualified himself in an eminent degree for his subsequent intimacy with the leading prelates of the kingdom, Archbishop Theobald, and his successor Becket. To the latter of these eminent men he dedicated his famous 'Polycraticon,' or treatise "De nugis curialium, et vestigiis philosophorum," in which he keenly satirises the manners of the age, and the pretensions of the schoolmen. This work is indeed a curious and valuable monument of English literature in the 12th century; and it is impossible to peruse it without admiring the extensive and varied erudition of its author, and perceiving how far he was in advance of the general spirit of the times.

His connexion with Archbishop Becket involved him in many troubles; he was the very first person whom Henry II. sent into exile on account of his known attachment to that prelate. He continued nearly seven years abroad, during which time many dazzling offers were made to him, to induce him to desert the cause of his friend, and return to England; but, although he had repeatedly declared that he did not approve of the archbishop's conduct in every instance, yet he rejected with scorn every proposal which implied the desertion of his friend and patron in the hour of adversity, and devoted his whole time and abilities to negotiating the archbishop's affairs in Italy and France. In one of these journeys he was admitted to a familiar interview with his countryman, Pope Adrian IV., who condescended to inquire at him in what estimation the public generally held the successor of Peter and the holy Roman church. If John's own account of the conversation may be credited, he returned an answer to this interrogatory which would have been admired in the boldest of the reformers of the 16th century: he says that he told all the truth to his holiness, and assured him that the public thought, "the pope himself was a burthen too great for whole Christendom to bear."

He returned into England a little before the archbishop, and was a mournful spectator of the murder of his friend, from whom he endeavoured, at the risk of his own life, to ward off the blow of the assassins. In 1172, he was promoted to the bishopric of Chartres through his interest with the archbishop of Sens.³ He died in the enjoyment of this dignity, in 1182.

Besides the works above mentioned, John composed several other treatises. A collection of his letters, consisting of above 300, many of them addressed to the first personages of the age, was published at Paris in 1611. The 'Polycraticon' was published at Paris in 1513, and also at Leyden in 1595, and again in 1639. A French translation of it appeared at Paris in 1640, under the title of 'Les Vanitez de la Cour.' His style is polished and classical to a surprising degree for the time in which he wrote.⁴ Throughout his writings there are also evidences of a vigorous understanding, and a mind much above the weak philosophy of his age. Of this there is sound evidence in his account

² Seldeni Dissert. in Flet. cap. xii. sect. 2.

³ Bulæ Hist. Univ. Paris. Tom. ii. p. 394.

⁴ Stephanus often quotes him in his notes on Saxo, and with these eulogiums,—'aureus scriptor,'—'elegantior ut omnia,'—'auctor cum veterum quopiam comparandus, p. 151.

of a visit which he made to some of the companions of his earlier studies, long after he had familiarised himself with the philosophy of the schools. "I found them," says he, "the same men, and in the same place; they had not advanced a single step towards resolving our ancient questions, nor added a single proposition, however small, to their stock of knowledge. Whence I inferred," he adds with great truth, "what indeed it was easy to collect, that dialectic studies, however useful they may be when united to other branches of knowledge, are in themselves barren and unprofitable."

Geoffrey of Monmouth.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1152.

GEOFFREY, or JEFFERY, of Monmouth, a celebrated British historian, flourished in the reign of Henry I. He was born at Monmouth, and probably received his education in the Benedictine monastery near that place, where tradition still points out the vestiges of a small apartment which is said to have formed his study; unfortunately, however, the building thus indicated is evidently of an age greatly posterior to the time of our historian. He rose successively to the archdeaconry of Monmouth and bishopric of St Asaph, to the latter of which dignities he was promoted in the year 1152. He is said by the Magdeburg centuriators to have been raised to the dignity of a cardinal also, but of this there is no clear evidence. It is certain, however, that he was warmly patronised, both in his ecclesiastical and literary capacity, by some of the most influential personages of the age, and amongst others by Robert, earl of Gloucester, and Alexander, bishop of Lincoln.

Considerable obscurity hangs over the real origin of the historical work, or chronicle, with which his name is associated. Leland, Bale, Pits, and Price, inform us that Walter Mapes, or Calenius, then archdeacon of Oxford, and a man like Geoffrey himself, of curious research into the history of past times, having collected, during his travels in Armorica, a considerable mass of materials illustrative of early British history, placed them in the hands of Geoffrey of Monmouth, for the purpose of getting them translated and arranged by that scholar, whose previous studies were known to have eminently qualified him for the task. Nothing could have been more gratifying to Geoffrey than such a commission; he addressed himself with eagerness to the task, and in a short time produced chiefly from the materials which had been thus supplied to him, a chronicle of Britain in Latin prose, and a life of the Caledonian Merlin in Latin hexameters.¹

There are two editions of Geoffrey's chronicle extant in Latin, one of which was published in 4to, by Ascensius, at Paris, in 1517; the other is included in Commeline's edition of the '*Rerum Britannicarum Scriptores*,' published at Heidelberg in 1587, folio. A translation of the chronicle, by Aaron Thompson, was published at London in 1718, 8vo. Geoffrey also appears to have meditated the translation of a third

¹ Bale ii. 65.—Thompson's preface to Jeffrey's Hist. Lond. 1718, p. 30.

work on the migration of the British clergy to Armorica; but whether he ever executed this design is unknown.

Matthew Paris declares, that in all these works Geoffrey approved himself a faithful translator. But William of Newburgh, Buchanan, Baronius, and others, maintain that he invented a very considerable part of the chronicle, which he professed to translate from a British original; and Turner has adopted the same opinion. "I believe," says this very respectable historian, "the book of Geoffrey of Monmouth, who lived in the twelfth century, to be his own composition, and to abound with fable."² Yet, as Mr Ellis remarks,³ it is not easy to reconcile the foregoing passage with the following from the same author:—"I believe Geoffrey to state the fact when he says he found the history of Arthur in a book brought from that country (Bretagne)." The argument drawn by those inclined to cast suspicion on our chronicler from the outrageously coloured tales with which the work abounds, may, it is clear, be quite as good evidence on the other side; the probability is even greater that those wild fables and fictions were the invention of that earlier chronicler for whom Geoffrey professes he performed the office of a translator, than of the translator himself. Geoffrey nowhere exhibits the slightest solicitude to establish the authenticity of any portion of the chronicle. He urges the simple fact, that what he now publishes is translated from the text of a native historian; and when he supplies some deficiencies in the original respecting the struggle for empire between Arthur and Modred, he is careful to state the fact.⁴

The chronicle is divided into nine books, the first of which, containing nearly a third of the work, extends from the birth of Brutus to the introduction of Christianity into Britain. The second book extends to the reign of Vortigern. The fourth is episodal, being a translation of Merlin's prophecies. The fifth narrates the reign of Aurelius Ambrosius. The sixth is dedicated to the reign of Uther. The seventh, and most important of the whole, is occupied by the reign of Arthur. The eighth relates the reigns of Constantine, Conan, Vortiporius, Malgo, and Caticus. The ninth, and concluding book, is occupied with the romantic adventures of Edwin and Cadwallo. The work is altogether an extremely entertaining one, whatever be its value as a contribution to the historical literature of the country. It was versified in the Norman dialect by Wace, and again in English by Layamon; and it is to it we owe the affecting story of Shakspeare's *Lear*, that of Sackville's *Ferrex and Pollux*, some of the finest episodes in the *Polyolbion*, and the exquisite fiction of *Sabrina* in the masque of *Comus*.

² *Vindication of the Ancient British Poems*, p. 145.

³ *Specimens of early English Romance*, vol. i. p. 85.

⁴ Mr Coxe, in his '*Tour in Monmouthshire*,' informs us, that it is the opinion of the best Welsh critics that Geoffrey's work is a vitiated translation of a history of the British kings, written by Tyssilio, or St Talian, bishop of St Asaph, in the 7th century. But Lhuyd is of opinion that Tyssilio's work was entirely ecclesiastical.

Lapamon.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1180.

THE researches which have been made by literary antiquaries into the remote periods of our national history, have been productive of many interesting and not unuseful discoveries. They have enabled us to trace the dependance of literature on the various circumstances which modify men's characters and determine their condition: they have at the same time shown us how that of our own country has been formed, like a noble river from many small and confluent ones, by the junction of various streams of thought with that which was more properly original and peculiar to the nation. The history of poetry is intimately connected with that of language, particularly in the early stages of a nation's literature. It is probable that the reign of the Romans extinguished the spark of poetry which might exist in the country, instead of fanning it into flame or exciting any new feeling. The men who composed the legions were too civilized to admire the poetry of barbarians, but not sufficiently refined or educated to bring with them any literature of their own. The Saxons fought from different motives,—were in a condition far more favourable to the cultivation of poetry,—assimilated better with the native genius of England,—and introduced a language and modes of thinking more naturally in harmony with its wild and northern character. The union consequently of the British and Saxon dialects became close and permanent, and the language which was thence formed gained so firm a hold of the national mind, that two generations of conquerors were unable to loosen it. For a considerable period it remained unchanged and unmixed; and when the Danes flooded it, as it were, with a new vocabulary, it still retained its old and genuine characteristics. The Normans introduced a language altogether new; but, notwithstanding the efforts employed to destroy the Saxon, its words and idioms outlasted the dominion of the Conqueror, and have resisted for a thousand years every revolution both of power and of fashion.

It is thus that the labours of the inquirers who have explored the remote tracks of our literature, have led us by a broad line from one period to another, enabling us at every stage to see enough to satisfy a reasonable curiosity. Specimens even exist of the Danish-Saxon, which may be regarded as proof that that language was well cultivated, and that a taste for poetry, a perception of the sublime representations of Scripture, was possessed in a sufficient degree to lay the foundation of a literature. There is reason to believe that the Saxons, before the invasion of the Danes, had not neglected the study of poetry; and Camden, in his rare and curious volume entitled, 'Remaines concerning Britaine,' makes allusion to the skill which some, both of the native British and the Saxons, evinced in versification. After contending that "in grandity and gravity, in smoothness and propriety, in quickness and briefness," the poets of England are equal to any, he says, "this would easily appear if any lives were extant of that worthy British lady, Claudia Ruffina, so commended by Martial; or of Gildas, which Lilius Giraldus saw in the libraries of Italy; or of

old Chedmon, who, by divine inspiration, about the year 680, became so sweet a poet in our English tongue, that with his sweet verses full of compunction, he withdrew many from vice to virtue, and a religious fear of God; or of our Claudius Clemens, one of the first founders of the university of Paris." The specimens which he then gives from some later writers, prove that the feeling of poetry was not lost amid all the troubles which the nation had undergone; what, however, of the passages he extracts are from Latin poems, and he apologises for the uncouth expressions they occasionally exhibit, on the plea that the age was so overcast with the "thick fogs of ignorance, that every little spark of liberal learning seemed wonderful." Joseph of Exeter, who followed King Richard I. to Palestine, was one of the most celebrated poets of that age, and commemorated the acts of his master in a poem called 'Antiocheidos.'¹ John Hanvill, a monk of St Albans, was another writer who distinguished himself also in Latin verse;² as was also Felix, a monk of Crowland. In the descriptions of these early authors there is a certain strength and vivacity which amply atone for their want of classical correctness; and in the perusal of their remains the student of literary history will be often interested by discovering the germ of that style both of thought and expression, which is so genuinely English.

It was, however, the great merit—as has been justly remarked—of the Saxons, before the Norman conquest, that they could express most aptly all the conceits of the mind in their own tongue, without borrowing from any. A curious proof is given of this in the words used to express the various objects of religious veneration. Thus, the word *gospel*, which means literally *God's speech*, was used instead of *evangelium*, or any modern derivative. The disciples of Christ were called *Leorning cuihtors*, that is, *learning servants*; and religion itself was termed *eah-fastnes*, "as the one and only assurance and fast anchor-hold of our souls' health." The methods employed by the Normans to introduce their own tongue would have obliterated the traces of any less firmly rooted language, or of any less intrinsically adapted to perform the offices of such a species of machinery as human speech. But with all the arbitrary power which the conquerors used to effect their purpose, the utmost they could do was to engraft the Norman on the Saxon. The iron tongue of the North lost no particle of its true metal; and after French had long been employed not only in matters of public concern, but in the common intercourse of the better orders of society, the Saxon re-asserted its claims to superiority, and was acknowledged as the staple of the national language. Of the little favour it received from the invaders, the most convincing evidence exists in a variety of ancient documents. In Trevisa's translation of Higden's *Polychronicon*, as quoted by Warton,³ we find it distinctly declared, that it was a primary object in the education of children to prevent their knowing any language but French. "Children in scole," says the old author, "agenst the usage and manir of all other nations, beeth compelled for to lev hire owne language, and for to construe hir lessons and hire thynges in Frenche; and so they haveth sethe Normans came first into Engeland. Also gentilmen children beeth taught to speke

¹ *Lel.* p. 224.

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² *Ib.* p. 250.³ *Hist. of English Poetry*, vol. i. sect. i. p. 5.

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Frensche from the tyme that they bith rokked in here cradell, and kenneth speke and play with a childes broche: and uplondissche men will likne himself to gentylmen, and fondeth with great besynesse for to speke Frensche to be told of." But the strongest proof, perhaps, that could be given of the extent to which the Normans carried their violent proceedings in respect to the introduction of their language, is the fact, that in the year 1095, a bishop Wolstan of Worcester, was actually deprived of his see for his persevering attachment to his native tongue.⁴

There was, however, a harshness and a want of copiousness in the Saxon which admitted of its being modified without injury by the introduction of new words and modes of expression. We accordingly find that by the commencement of the 13th century poetry began to flow with a smoother melody, and to exhibit a greater variety of images. Some of the specimens to which the date has been affixed of the year 1200, are extremely beautiful in point of sentiment, and are couched in a language evidently rich in poetical expression. One of these contains the following description of spring:

Lenten ys come with love to tonne,
With blosmen and with briddes ronne,
That al this blisse bryngeth:
Days ezes in this dales,
Nofes suete of nyhtegales,
Uch foul songe singeth.

The threstlecoe hym threteth so,
Away is heure winter wo,
When woderove springeth;
This foules singeth ferly fele,
Ant wlyteth on heure wynter wele,
That al the wode ryngeth.⁵

The following love-song will show that the versification had acquired a degree of smoothness when it was produced—which is supposed to have been in the reign of King John—that left little for the poets of a more refined age to effect:

When the nyhtegale singes the wodes waxen grene,
Lef, and gras, and blosme, springes in Avril y wene;
Ant love is to myn harte gon with one spere so kene,
Nyht and day my blod het drynkes myn hart deth me tene.

Ich have lived al this yer, that I may love na more,
Ich have siked moni syk, lemon, for thin ore,
Me his love never the ner, and that me reweth sore;
Suete lemon, thenck on me, ich have loved the zore.

Suete lemon, y preye the, of love one speche
While y lyve in worlde so wyde other nulle y seche
With thy love, my suete leof, mi blis thou mihtes eche,
A suete cos of thy mouth mihte be my leche.⁶

Specimens might also be produced to show that there was no want of variety either in the metre or in the form of the stanza. But the above will suffice to give the reader an idea of the progress which, even at this early period of its literature, the art of versification was making in England. But it was not till a subsequent age that these glimmerings

⁴ M. Paris, sub ann.

⁵ MSS. Harl.

⁶ Ibid.

of true poetic power increased into a steady and permanent light. Some of the larger poems of this era, which appear to have possessed a considerable share of popularity, are deficient both in spirit and design, and exhibit only the rude efforts of inexperienced rhymers. Little must have been known of the true nature of poetry when such productions could obtain general approbation; and we may accordingly conclude that the taste of the people had as yet received none of those strong impressions which at once determined its direction, and enabled it to judge intuitively of what is presented to its judgment.

It was before our poetic literature had reached this stage of its progress, that Layamon, a priest of Ernesley upon Severn, translated Wace's '*Brut d'Angleterre*'—which is a Norman-French version of Geoffrey of Monmouth's history—into English verse. We do not possess any materials for a biographical notice of this early writer; but regarding his translation as one of the earliest specimens of metre in the native language, we have used his name for the purpose of introducing a few remarks on the state of our poetical literature towards the close of the second period of English history. Mr Ellis supposes that Layamon finished his translation in 1180, and conceives our language to have been formed betwixt that period and 1216. The following is a specimen of Layamon's verses:—

And of alle than folke
The wuneden ther on folde,
Wes thisses landes folk
Leodene handest itald;
And alswa the wimmen
Wunliche on heowen.

That is, in English—"And of all the folk that dwelt on earth was this land's folk the handsomest (people told); and also the women handsome of hue." Mr Ellis regards the dialect of Layamon as pure Saxon. Mr Campbell's opinion seems more just, that it is truly neither Saxon nor English, but something intermediate betwixt the old and new languages,—“something,” to use his own beautiful simile, “like the new insect stirring its wings before it has shaken off the aurelia state.”

There is good evidence that the following ballad must have been composed in the reign of Henry III., probably soon after the battle of Lewes, which was fought in 1264. It is entitled, '*Richard of Alemaigne*,' and seems to have been written by one of Leicester's adherents:—

“Sitteth alle stille, ant herkneth to me:
The kyn[g] of Alemaigne, bi mi leauté,
Thritti-thousent pound askede he
For te make the pees in the countré,
Ant so he dude more.
Richard,
Thah thou be ever trichard,
Tricthen shalt thou never more.

Richard of Alemaigne, whil that he wes kyng,
He spende al is tresour opon swyvyng,

¹ Essay on English Poetry, p. 33.

Haveth he nout of Walingford oferlyng,
 Let him habbe, ase he brew, bale to dryng,
 Maugre Wyndesore.
 Richard, &c.

The kyng of Alemaigne wend do ful wel,
 He saisede the mulne for a castel,
 With hare sharpe swerdes he grounde the stel,
 He wende that the sayles were mangonel,
 To helpe Wyndesore.
 Richard, &c.

The kyng of Alemaigne gederede ys host,
 Makede him a castel of a mulne-post,
 Wende with is pride, ant is muchele bost,
 Brohte from Alemayne moni sori gost,
 To store Wyndesore.
 Richard, &c.

By god, that is aboven ous, he dude muche synne,
 That lette passen over-see the erl of Warynne.
 He hath robbed Engelond, the mores ant the fenne,
 The gold ant the selver ant yboren henne,
 For love of Wyndesore.
 Richard, &c.

Sire Simond de Mountfort hath suore bi ys chyn,
 Hevede he nou here the erl of Waryn,
 Shuld he never more come to is yn,
 Ne with sheld, ne with spere, ne with other gyn,
 To help Wyndesore.
 Richard, &c.

Sir Simond de Montfort hath suore by ys 'fot,'
 Hevede he nou here sire Hue de Bigot,
 Al he shulde grante here twelf-moneth scot,
 Shulde he never more with his sot pot,
 To helpe Wyndesore.
 Richard, &c.

Be the luef, be the loht, sire Edward,
 Thou shalt ride sporeles o thy lyard,
 Al the ryhte way to Dovere-ward,
 Shalt thou nevermore breke foreward.
 Ant that reweth sore,
 Edward,
 Thou dudest ase a shreward,
 Forsoke thyn emes lora.

Alexander Hales.

DIED A. D. 1249.

ALEXANDER HALES was born in Gloucester at the beginning of the 13th century, and received his name from a monastery belonging to the Franciscan order, in which he received his education. While yet a youth he was sent to the university of Paris, where he applied himself to study with the most indefatigable industry. He soon distinguished himself by the extent and variety of his learning, but especially in those cherished pursuits of the age, scholastic theology and the canon law. No sooner had he taken his degree of doctor, than he became professor in these branches, and his profound erudition and uncommon acuteness soon gained him the title of the 'Irrefragable doctor.' Some of his pupils afterwards became as distinguished as their master, and even more so. Among them were the celebrated Duns Scotus and John Fedanza, better known by the name of Cardinal Bonaventura. In 1222, the irrefragable doctor consigned himself to the monastic life amongst the Franciscans at Paris. Here he passed the rest of his days employing his time in that most laborious trifling—the composition of various works of scholastic theology. The greater part of them have long since perished; many extant works, however, are ascribed to him, but the only one that critics regard as genuine is the 'Summa Unversia Theologia,' or Commentaries on the Four Books of Sentences. He entered upon this work by order of Pope Innocent IV. It was first printed at Nuremberg in 1482, fol.; then at Basil in 1502; at Venice, 1575—6; and at Cologne in 1622. It is needless to say there have been no later editions. This work displays, of course, much of that oracular dogmatism and ambitious speculation which distinguished all performances of a similar stamp and of the same age, together with much also of that metaphysical subtlety and acute reasoning from faulty premises which were no less characteristic of them. In vain, however, shall we in general look either for useful knowledge or sound argumentation. Alexander Hales was one of the great admirers and expositors of Aristotle, and together with his contemporaries Albertus Magnus, Duns Scotus, and Thomas Aquinas, gave the Aristotelian philosophy that pre-eminence which it enjoyed over all Europe, till Bacon, that great iconoclast, disputed its claims to the homage of mankind, and aimed the first deadly blow at the reputation of the scholastic philosophers and their master. Since that these laborious and learned writers have been rarely looked into; they lived only as the commentatators and expounders of Aristotle, or as the authors of works wholly constructed on his philosophy, and it was neither just nor probable that their fame should survive his. As a theologian, Alexander Hales, like his contemporaries, adopted that most pernicious custom of applying the Aristotelian philosophy, or rather the extravagant system which they wrought out of it, and of illustrating the sacred page by the flickering light of the lamp of the Stagirite. By this means every book of theology, not less than of philosophy, was soon crowded with verbal quibbles and metaphysical subtleties. The 'Commentaria in quatuor libros sententiarum,' published under the name of Hales at

Lyons in 1515, are ascribed by the best critics to another author. In addition to the works usually ascribed to him, it is supposed that many of his MSS. exist in the libraries of Milan, Oxford, and Lambeth. *Requiescant in pace!* Those who wish to know more of this 'irrefragable doctor,' may consult Dupin, Leland, and Cave.

Matthew Paris.

DIED A. D. 1259.

ONE of the most faithful and best informed of the numerous English historians of the 13th century was Matthew Paris, an individual of whose personal history little is known. Fuller makes him a native of Cambridgeshire, but upon no better authority than the fact that there was an ancient family of his name in that county. The first circumstance of his life which we know with certainty is, that he assumed the habit in the abbey of St Albans in 1217. Here he continued to reside until the period of his death in 1259, having never obtained any higher office than that of historiographer to the brotherhood,¹ although he enjoyed the friendship and even familiarity of several crowned heads. By his own sovereign, Henry III., he was treated in a very kind and confidential manner, being often invited to his table and employed in different missions of importance. He even hints that the king condescended to lend him occasional assistance in the composition of his great work,² although our author was certainly no sycophant or flatterer of princes, but, on the contrary, appears to have frequently admonished his sovereign with great boldness of speech. Indeed, no historian of his age has recorded the follies and vices as well as the virtues of the great with a more unsparing hand; and even though a monk himself, he has depicted the insatiable avarice, the intolerable tyranny, the luxury and perfidy of the court of Rome in the strongest colours. To this perfect integrity and fearlessness of character, he added no small share of genius and learning. "He was," says Pit, "an elegant poet, an eloquent orator, an acute logician, a subtle philosopher, a solid divine, a celebrated historian, and, which crowned the whole, a man justly famous for the purity, the integrity, the innocence and simplicity of his manners."³ Among the princes who honoured him with their confidence and correspondence was Haco, king of Norway, for whom he transacted some affairs of importance in London, and who having obtained a bull from Pope Innocent IV. authorizing him to adopt steps for the reformation of the manners of the ecclesiastics in his kingdom, fixed upon Paris as the best qualified person to aid him in the projected reformation. At Haco's invitation, our historian went to Norway in 1248, and spent about a year in that country in restoring monastic discipline to its primitive strictness and regularity.⁴ During his residence in Norway, he acted as ambassador for Louis IX. of France, whose friendship he had won by his learning and integrity.

The theological works of Matthew Paris have perished, but his his-

¹ Tan. Biblioth. Brit. p. 573. ² Hist. Angl. p. 494. ³ Prelat. Script. 367.
⁴ M. Paris, 504.

torical labours have been more fortunate. The greatest and most valuable of these is his '*Historia Major*,' which contains the history of England from the conquest to the 43d of Henry III. or 1259. In the early portion of this work, our historian stands much indebted to the labours of his predecessor in the office of historiographer to the abbey of St Albans, Roger de Wendover; and it was continued after his death to 1273 by his successor in the same office, William Rishanger. Of this work our author executed an abridgment under the title of '*Historia Minor*,' which is still preserved in MS. The first part of Matthew of Westminster's '*Flowers of History*,' extending from the creation of the world to the conquest of England, is said to have been little more than a transcript of an unpublished work of Matthew Paris. Our author likewise wrote the lives of the two Offas, kings of Mercia, and of the twenty-three first abbots of St Albans. His historical compositions have been several times printed, and will be always consulted with interest and profit by the student of early English history. They are, indeed, disfigured with many ridiculous legends, but such kind of credulity was the folly of the times rather than of the man. The best and most complete edition of his works was published at London in 1684. The first edition of the '*Historia Major*' appeared in 1571.

Roger Bacon.

BORN A. D. 1214.—DIED A. D. 1292.

THE celebrated Roger Bacon, a monk of the order of St Francis, was born at Ilchester in Somersetshire, in the year 1214.¹ He is, perhaps, entitled to be considered as at least equal to any man of his age; and when we say this, we do not forget that Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, Bonaventura, and Alexander Hales, flourished in the same century. That Roger Bacon was their match in general learning and powers of reasoning, will be readily admitted, while it must be granted that he far surpassed all of them in the knowledge of nature. This extraordinary man certainly gave strong practical indications that he was acquainted with the true way of studying the physical sciences,—with the secret of the experimental philosophy; though undoubtedly deficient in his method, and with a very imperfect conception of those vast and comprehensive general principles, which his great namesake FRANCIS BACON—a singular coincidence—showed to be applicable to all the sciences, and to constitute the only way in which man can become the 'interpreter of nature.' Thus Bacon deserves to be considered one of the greatest of the many forerunners of that auspicious era, which was to usher in a revival both of literature and religion, and to witness the most splendid discoveries in all departments of science; he was one of the many prophets, who amidst imperfect revelations and beclouded knowledge, gave promise to the world of the 'better dispensation.' It was not until many such had appeared, flashing one after another through the night of ages, and successively penetrating the thick darkness with a brighter and steadier ray, that at length the 'day

¹ Hist. et Antiq. Oxon. p. 136.

slowly dawned,' and the 'day-star' of science arose. In extenuating the merit, then, of those great geniuses who, though possessed of splendid powers, shone so dimly during the middle ages, we must never forget to weigh carefully and impartially all the circumstances which oppressed their faculties and circumscribed their views. Roger Bacon might, for any thing we know, have been the Francis Bacon of a later age; a light that would only tremble like a star amidst the 'darkness of the middle ages,' might be effulgent as the sun under other circumstances. We shall find, therefore, that the fame of these men is to rest, not on their absolute knowledge, but on their attainments viewed in relation to their times; and if this rule of judgment be adopted, sure we are, that many a greater name in the annals of modern science—greater, simply because placed in more favourable circumstances—will stand eclipsed by the glory of Roger Bacon. The giant strength with which some of the men of the middle ages grappled with their difficulties, and partially upheaved the vast piles of prejudice and ignorance under which they lay buried, is not less worthy of our admiration than the alacrity with which their successors, relieved of all these encumbrances, press on in the open path of science and knowledge. There is a gradual preparation,—there are successive steps by which, in analogy with all the schemes of providence, and the limited nature of the human faculties, the Divine Being brings about every great change in this world, political, moral, and philosophical; and it is not less pleasing to mark the progress of the species in knowledge and improvement, than to watch the developement of the faculties of the individual.

Of the early years of Roger Bacon little is known; he received his education in the university of Oxford, at that time highly celebrated,—we speak of course in relation to the general darkness of the age. It numbered amongst its scholars men of no mean attainments and of no little genius. Many of them were something better than acute dialecticians,—men, whose knowledge was not confined to the vain subtleties of the scholastic logic, or the still vainer subtleties of the scholastic theology. At this period classical literature began to be more generally studied than heretofore; and it is worthy of notice, that Oxford, which earliest encouraged these pursuits, still maintains her pre-eminence in them. Amongst his most kind and zealous patrons, Bacon ranked the celebrated Grosseteste. To his instructions and advice, to the general influence which he exerted on his young mind, Bacon was probably indebted for that eminently practical bent which was given to his genius, and which led him, if not to despise much of the learning of his days, at all events, to assign to it a very inferior rank. To this conclusion we are led by the fact that Bacon, in the honourable mention which he makes of his great patron and benefactor, characterizes and applauds him, as one of the few who could, at that time, distinguish between truly valuable knowledge, and that which, as frivolous and worthless, deserved not the name.² Another of Bacon's friends was Edmund Price, archbishop of Canterbury. This prelate resided much at Oxford, and there afforded our young scholar much kind assistance. He was also deeply indebted to William

² *Opus Maj.* p. 64.

Shirwood, and Richard Fishacre, the former chancellor of Lincoln, and celebrated for his mathematical attainments, the latter a distinguished lecturer in the sciences, not only at Oxford but at Paris, at that time the most ancient seats of learning and science in Europe. To the latter city most of our scholars repaired, after passing through the usual course in England, for the further prosecution of their studies, and Roger Bacon adopted the usual practice. While at Paris, he pursued various branches of learning and science with unremitted application. His reward was the degree of doctor of theology, and the character of one of the most profound and extraordinary scholars of his age. After this he took the monastic habit of the order of St Francis; but whether he did this while he yet tarried in France or after he returned to England, which was in 1240, cannot be determined.³ On his return to England, Bacon took up his abode at Oxford. He here distinguished himself, as did also his brother, Robert Bacon, by a sermon preached before Henry III., in which he inveighed in very strong language against the excessive deference which that monarch paid to the opinion of Peter, bishop of Winchester, as well as against the practice—then so generally adopted—of giving the most important posts in the kingdom to foreigners. In this honest expression of an independent mind, he was a worthy imitator of his great patron, Grosseteste. But all Bacon's inclinations and habits led him away from public life, and he applied himself to study with a zeal as ardent as his perseverance was invincible. Discontented with the learning of the schools—a mark of uncommon penetration—he chiefly employed himself in the study of nature, in experimenting. The words in which he declares the inadequacy of Aristotle's writings to answer the purpose to which they were applied, are so remarkable, that we cannot refrain from quoting them. "*Si haberem potestatem super libros Aristotelis, ego facerem omnes cremari; quia non est nisi temporis amissio studere in illis, et causa erroris et multiplicatio ignorantie ultra id quod valeat explicari.*"

For more than twenty years did he devote himself with indefatigable industry to various branches of the physical sciences, during which period he expended on books, instruments, and experiments, not less than £2000—then, of course, a very large sum—which was principally contributed by his generous patrons and friends.⁴ It has been a matter of some doubt whether he made these experiments at Oxford or Paris; the former opinion seems the more probable, as his work detailing these experiments is addressed to William of Paris, thus implying that it was composed elsewhere. In these pursuits, he made—as will be the case with every one—a progress proportioned to his genius and industry. His discoveries indeed may appear small beside the vast accumulations of modern science, but they will be justly considered wonderful by any man who reflects on the darkness of the age in which Bacon lived, and that his discoveries were all his own. In order to obtain an easy access to the sciences, he applied himself to a diligent study of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic. The consequence was, he was not only a match for any of his contemporaries in metaphysics and theology, but far surpassed them in grammar and the languages. In astronomy, as is well known, he gave a notable proof

³ Oudin, *Comment. de Script. Eccl.* tom. III. p. 191. ⁴ In opere minori. Cap. xvii. I. 2 N

of his skill by showing the errors which existed in the calendar, and pointing out with uncommon exactness the way to correct them. A copy of his corrected calendar is preserved in the Bodleian library. Of this discovery Dr Jebb says, "*Inter pulcherrima jure recensenda est quæ humana unquam excogitaverat industria.*"

This discovery we should consider chiefly valuable as connected with astronomy: not so, however, the men of that day. It helped Paul, bishop of Fossoni, to concoct his treatise on the right celebration of Easter, in which he disputes some of the statements of Bacon. It is a striking confirmation, however, of the extraordinary penetration of Bacon, that when the celebrated Copernicus, at the request of that bishop, took some more accurate observations with a view to the settlement of this question, he verified the disputed statements of our scholar. As a mechanician, Bacon was even still more renowned than as an astronomer. In his own works, he speaks of many extraordinary machines which he had made or seen; and still more extraordinary ones are attributed to him by the blind admiration of some, or—strange to say—the base envy of others, who magnified his power for the very purpose of fixing upon him the character of magician. That such nonsense should have been believed, however, is a conclusion that he must have possessed a very uncommon measure of ingenuity. Optics he greatly improved both in theory and the practice. This science was then in its infancy, and Bacon expended much both of time and money upon it. That he must have made considerable progress is evident from the fact, that he not only describes with much accuracy lenses both convex and concave, and the manner in which, by the refraction of the rays of light, they magnify or diminish objects, but he points out the application of spherical glasses to aid impaired eye-sight,—for viewing distant objects, whether terrestrial or celestial—whence he has been supposed, with considerable probability, to have been the inventor of the telescope,—and to the construction of the camera obscura and the burning glass. In geography, our author had exhibited the same indefatigable industry as in all the other branches of knowledge. He made himself thoroughly acquainted with all the discoveries of his age, and knew how to make use of them, as appears by some curious passages from his '*Opus Majus*,' preserved in Hakluyt's collection of voyages and travels.⁵

But it was in chemistry that Bacon's talents were most conspicuous; and it was here, too, that he betrayed some of those infirmities which, in those superstitious days, beset even the most exalted genius. The facts which he established, however, were numerous; and, in more than one instance, led to important results. It is well known that many of the most valuable discoveries were made while pursuing that visionary object, the philosopher's stone, or that brilliant illusion, the mode of transmuting inferior metals into gold. This splendid folly,—this scheme for creating an El-dorado at home,—was prosecuted by most of the chemists, or rather all chemists of the age, with a diligence, which, had it been bestowed on more rational objects, under the guidance of the inductive philosophy, must have led to the most illustrious discoveries. While pursuing this gilded shadow, however, the alchemists

⁵ Vol. III.

sometimes stumbled upon a truly 'golden' truth; just as the first adventurers to America sometimes hit upon the true path to wealth, by colonising that rich soil,—wealth, which they often sought in vain beneath its surface. It was in accordance with the same visionary spirit which showed itself so conspicuously in the sublime nonsense of the 'philosopher's stone,' that Roger Bacon speaks of the extraordinary virtues of the *aurum potabile*, or tincture of gold, and of a mysterious charm which was to renew in old age the warmth and vigour of youth: "*illa medicina*," says he, "*quæ tollant omnes immunditias et corruptiones vitioris metalli ut fierent argentum et aurum purissimum, æstimatur a sapientibus posse tollere corruptiones corporis humani in tantum, ut vitam per multa secula prolongare.*" When we find him thus credulous, it is not wonderful that many should have doubted whether he really possessed those great chemical secrets of which he often speaks in a language not a little bombastic, and with such an imposing air of mystery. We here refer more particularly to what he says of a certain unextinguishable fire, and of the marvellous powers of a substance which many supposed to be gunpowder. Yet, under this frequently inflated language and affectation of mystery, his language is often so plain as to convince us that he was really aware of the composition of gunpowder; while the 'unextinguishable fire' was, in all probability, a species of phosphorus. That the invention of gunpowder, commonly attributed to a German of a much later period, belongs to him is plain from the following passages in his works:—"In omnem distantiam, quam volumus, possumus artificialiter componere ignem comburentem ex sale petrae et aliis." At another time he still more plainly indicates the ingredients of this wonderful substance; half-disguising the secret, however, under the mystery of anagram. "*Sed tamen salis petrae luru mope can ubre et sulphuris: et sic facies tonitrum et coruscationem, si scies artificium.*"⁶ Here it will be observed that the letters which compose the name of the third ingredient are transposed, "carbonum pulvere." In another part of his writings, Bacon speaks of this discovery in that exaggerated and mysterious jargon which was so characteristic of the age in which he lived, and which, like all perversions of the simple truth, brought its own punishments along with it; for these high-sounding pretensions only exposed him to the imputation of magic power.

His knowledge of practical medicine was evidently very considerable for his age, though, of course, tinctured with the errors of his chemistry. These two departments of knowledge uniformly enlarge or contract together.

These brilliant talents, and this profound and universal knowledge, were not in those days harmless possessions. If, in an after age, just when philosophy had begun to break the trammels imposed on her by false notions of religion, Galileo was to be imprisoned, because God had not constructed the universe after the ideas of infallible ecclesiastics, we need not think that Roger Bacon, at a still darker period, was to make such progress in knowledge and yet go unscathed. In those days, much knowledge was a dangerous possession. He was soon—as above hinted—accused of magic, partly by those who, it is feared,

⁶ Ep. de Secretis Operculis Artis et Naturæ, cap. xi.

urged the accusation more because they were envious of his fame than because they suspected his orthodoxy, and partly by those whose astounding ignorance qualified them for any exercise of credulity. This charge of magic appears to be groundless, inasmuch as he wrote treatises against both that and necromancy as unlawful arts. That he was superstitious, and that superstition often led him to empiricism, is only saying that he was born in the dark ages. That he believed in judicial astrology is also true, but then every body believed in it too. Nevertheless, the charge of magic, as usual, prevailed. The monks of his fraternity even went so far as to accuse him of holding converse with evil spirits, and no sooner did this rumour reach the ears of the pope, than he was forbidden to deliver lectures; then told that he must not mingle with society; and at last subjected to close imprisonment. It has been shrewdly conjectured that Bacon's intimacy with the obnoxious Grosse-teste, bishop of Lincoln, furnished an additional motive for this infamous persecution.

This malignant and cruel treatment had its usual effect—it recoiled on the persecutors. Bacon might, it is true, suffer in person, but instead of injuring his reputation his sufferings greatly enhanced it. About this time, the cardinal-bishop of Sabina, an intelligent and worthy man, who felt a great regard for Bacon, and knew enough of his writings to inspire him with the sincerest admiration of his genius, wrote to request a complete account of all his discoveries. With this request, as the heads of his order had forbidden him to communicate any of his works to the world, Bacon refused to comply. In a short time, however, the cardinal-bishop of Sabina became Pope Clement IV. Bacon then wrote to say that he was ready to comply with the wishes of the pontiff, rightly thinking that papal infallibility would protect him against his bigotted order. This was the foundation of his '*Opus Majus*,' a sort of improved edition, a careful digest of all his former productions. He transmitted it to the pope by John of London, as some say, but more likely by John of Paris, his favourite pupil, whom he had diligently initiated into all his mysteries of knowledge and science. It was in reference to this pupil that Bacon made the striking observation, "How ridiculous to boast of the powers of the human mind when all the knowledge it has acquired by a life's devotion to science, may be communicated to a youth in a few hours!" This work procured the patronage of Clement, who protected and encouraged the philosopher. But this interval of repose was of brief duration, Nicholas succeeded to the papal throne in 1278, and Jerom de Asculi, general of the order of St Francis, obtained his confirmation of a sentence which consigned our author to imprisonment, and prohibited the reading of his works. No cause has been assigned for this but vague and absurd suspicions of tampering with arts of necromancy and magic.

The profound attainments of Bacon gained him the title of '*Doctor Mirabilis*,' or the '*wonderful doctor*;' a title to which he undoubtedly had as fair a claim as Alexander Hales to that of the '*Irrefragable Doctor*,' or Thomas Aquinas to that of the '*Angelical Doctor*.' His works were exceedingly voluminous, and as various as his learning. Bayle tells us that more than eighty books were written by our friar, and that he had himself seen nearly one half. Dr Jebb mentions a still greater number, classifying them under the multifarious heads of

grammar, mathematics, physics, optics, geography, astronomy, chronology, chemistry, magic, medicine, logic, metaphysics, ethics, theology, philosophy, and miscellaneous. An ingenious, and by no means improbable conjecture has been hazarded, however, which would considerably diminish this prodigious number of volumes often ascribed to him. Different copies of the same treatise have often been circulated under different titles; and thus the titles of distinct chapters of the same work have not unfrequently passed for titles of distinct treatises. Not less than ten of these pieces are to be found in the single work, '*Epistola Fratris Rogeri Baconis de secretis operibus artis et naturæ et de nullitate magicæ.*' Published at Paris, 4to, 1542; 8vo. Basil. 1593; 8vo. Hamburgh, 1608, 1618. It is to be found in the '*Bibliotheca Chemica*' of Mangetus. It contains many valuable facts, with a complete exposure of the futility of necromancy, divinations, and magic.

It is singular that his *Opus Majus*, originally written in the form of an epistle to Pope Clement IV., and which is an abridgment and digest of all his other productions, was long unknown. It was not published till 1733, when Dr Jebb put forth a beautiful edition in folio, after a laborious collation of different MSS. In this work, in consistency with the author's views of the usefulness of knowledge, and the ardour with which it should be cultivated—topics on which he largely and frequently expatiates—he advises the pontiff whom he addresses to become the patron of literature and science. Bacon's chemical tracts, which are numerous, may be found in the *Thesaurus Chemicus*, 8vo. Frankfort, 1603, 1620. His treatise, entitled, '*On the means of avoiding the infirmities of old age,*' was first printed at Oxford in 1590. In this work he commends the use of those secret and mysterious medicines of which we have already spoken. This book was afterwards published with notes by Dr Richard Browne, under the quackish and imposing title of '*The cure of old age, and the preservation of youth.*' Several of Roger Bacon's tracts still remain in MS., and are likely to do so. Science, in these times, can gain nothing by their publication, while enough has appeared to establish the character of Bacon as one of the most extraordinary men of the age in which he lived. A treatise on Chronology, '*Computus Rogeri Baconis*;' a theological work, called '*Compendium Theologicum*,' and '*Liber Naturalium*,' are to be found in the king's library. Two other works under the name of '*Opus Minus*,' and '*Opus Tertium*,' are preserved in the Cotton library.

Albricius.

THE most careful examination of the best sources of intelligence has thrown no light on the history of this eminent physician and philosopher. But he lived at a time when the fame he possessed was not to be acquired without great exertion and ability. It is not at periods when science is mingled with much error that reputation for skill is easily obtained, but in those in which it is not cultivated at all. And this was by no means the case in the age of Albricius. Leland says that he had only met with his name by accident, but that he lived in the reign of John and Henry III. Bale adds that he was born in London, and

educated at Cambridge and Oxford. It appears also that after finishing his studies in these universities, he went abroad, and acquired, in the course of his travels, a knowledge of medical science, philosophy, and literature in general, which rendered him celebrated on his return to England, as one of the greatest scholars of the time. The learning which he must have possessed in order to enjoy this reputation may in some degree be estimated from our knowledge of the fact, that the physicians of the 13th and 14th centuries were expected to be versed in all the abstrusest sciences of the Greeks and Arabians. From the time of the celebrated Avicenna, who flourished in the 10th century, not only alchemy, but every branch of natural philosophy, became the almost necessary adjunct of medical study. The very uncertainty that attended the science placed its professor under the obligation of seeking this universal knowledge. Astronomy was not less essential than alchemy; and it was a notion very common among physicians, that the human frame was a sort of microcosm, or abstract of the world. Such an idea of course, favoured the indulgence of the wildest theories; but every theory of the kind demanded a large share of learning, if not of sound philosophy for its support; and they who thought that every thing in heaven and earth had its likeness in man's body, would naturally imagine that all the laws and motions of nature were to be viewed in relation to his existence. In a rational state of science this opinion might perhaps tend highly to the advancement of medical knowledge, but when the chief part of the ancient philosophy was wild conjecture, it necessarily led to a mode of study as unprofitable as it was laborious. "This variable composition of man's body," says Bacon, "hath made it as an instrument easy to distemper, and therefore the poets did well to conjoin music and medicine in Apollo, because the office of medicine is but to tune the curious harp of man's body, and to reduce it to harmony. So then the subject being so variable, hath made the art by consequence more conjectural; and the art being conjectural, hath made so much the more place to be left for imposture." Petrarch wrote a severe critique on the physicians of his age, and Chaucer does not fail to let us see all the weak points of the profession as it was presented to his observation in England; but the satires and philippics of these distinguished men show but the extent of study, which a conscientious physician like Albricius would have to pursue, and, through how many obstacles he would have to pass before obtaining the solid fame which he appears to have enjoyed. Of his works Bale has enumerated only the following: 'De origine Deorum,' 'De ratione Veneni,' 'Virtutes Antiquorum,' and 'Canones Speculativi.' In the 'Mythographi Latini,' published at Amsterdam in 1681, there is a small treatise 'De Deorum imaginibus,' to which the name Albricius is attached, but it is doubtful whether this was not Albricius, bishop of Utrecht, in the 8th century.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

TO THIRD PERIOD,

EXTENDING

FROM EDWARD I. TO THE ACCESSION OF HENRY VII.

WITH

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES

OF

Eminent Englishmen

WHO FLOURISHED DURING THAT PERIOD.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

TO

THIRD PERIOD.

Constitution of England not the result of occult causes—Origin of Magna Charta—Its repeated ratifications an evidence of the state of public feeling—The elements of popular liberty at work during the reign of Edward I.—Their influence in the reigns of Edward II. and III.—Common law under Edward III.—Advance of popular independence under Richard II.—Reigns of Henry IV., Henry V., Edward IV.—State of political feeling at the accession of Henry VII.—History of literature during this period—General views of the origin of a national literature—First seeds of literature in England—Scarcity of books—State of literature in the reign of Edward I.—Early impulse given to the study of Jurisprudence—Roger Bacon's account of the state of learning—Establishment of the English universities—Schoolmen—Poets—Robert of Gloucester and Robert Mannyng—Influence of the crusading spirit on English literature—State of literature under Edward III.—Occam—Burley—Chaucer—Gower—John of Salisbury—Neckham—Joseph of Exeter—Wickliffe—Knyghton—Higden—William of Wykeham—Literature under Henry IV., Henry V.—Lydgate and Occleve—Chichey—Waynflete—Minstrels more esteemed than Monks—Literature under Edward IV.—Origin of the Laureateship—Harding—Norton—Ripley—Fabyan—Invention of printing—Attention paid to classical literature—Schools—The Drama.

THE constitution of England was neither born in secret, nor nourished by invisible foster-mothers. If its rudiments lay scattered beneath the soil in a period of historical darkness, the earliest documents we possess indicate their existence. The metal was not run together by supernatural agency, but forged into a mass and into form by the bold sledge-hammers of known men. This has been the case from the first great act which secured liberty to our ancestors down to the present time. Deliberate resistance under conspicuous leaders,—legislative enactments the result of open counsels,—successes in war and commerce secured by the vigorous exertions of many keen and active minds,—these are causes to which the existence of our freedom may be traced through all its stages; and it is this opportunity which we possess of assigning its establishment and progress to the operation of certain causes, set at work by public men, which gives so deep an interest to our history, and so especial a value to our biography.

The security which was given to private property by Magna Charta, —the establishment of fixed courts of judicature,—and the increase of towns,—were the first results of that happy combination of valour and free wisdom which formed the earliest elements of the English character. That the great charter was the reward rather of foreseeing policy than of any sudden impulse,—that it sprung from the rooted principle of liberty, and not from the mere temporary suggestions of expediency,—is strongly evidenced by the care with which each succeeding generation struggled to confirm its enactments. No less than thirty-five times, it is stated, was this charter ratified at the instance of the nation;¹ and when it is considered that, in the pursuit of such solidly important objects, the community never acts without a guide,—that it is not kept together without the compacting power of many superior minds,—it will be easily seen how numerous a class of eminent men must have been formed in the active and popular walks of life, while our literature was quietly nourished by souls of a sedater and more tranquil nature.

The leaders of the parliament in the reigns of Edward I. and his two immediate successors, had a perilous and untried labour to perform. In the actions and characters of these men, as far as they can be at all known, the thoughtful reader can scarcely fail of taking a lively interest. They had to convince the sovereign that there was strength in the people when that strength was yet unexhibited; to establish maxims, which it required much light to render intelligible, but to support which they had only the simple expedient of attempting resistance. The first Edward's reign was one of memorable events for the monarchy: that of the second, and of the third, for the nation. Notwithstanding the reputation attending the successes of the last-mentioned monarch, the power of the people acquired new strength under his sceptre. We now hear of a king's being obliged not only to sacrifice his prime minister to the will of his people's representatives, but even to banish his mistress. This increase of authority in the people was not a naked or isolated good. While it tended to produce the most advantageous results, it was itself the result of many prosperous circumstances. The nation was in the healthy growing time of youth; its energies were continually multiplying; it seemed every year to see more clearly some branch of its interest or duty. A greater value was hence given both to industry and talent; jurisprudence had no longer a mere theory by which to try its maxims, but an actual state of things; and it may be learnt even from the very regulations which were passed to protect or promote trade—injudicious as the most of them were—that it was now plainly seen how greatly the strength of the country depended upon the labour of the commonalty.

Until the reign of Edward III., the civil and canon law appear to have preponderated in all the courts; but in this reign the practice of the common law courts was much improved by the introduction of a strict system of pleading. "Under the reign of Edward III.," says Sir Matthew Hale, "the law was improved to its greatest height. The judges and pleaders were very learned. The pleadings are more polish-

¹ "The charter was ratified four times by Richard III., twice by Edward I., fifteen times by Edward III., seven times by Richard II., six times by Henry IV., and once by Henry V."—*Lingard*.

ed than those in the time of Edward II., yet they have neither uncertainty, prolixity, nor obscurity. So that, at the latter part of this king's reign, the law seemed to be near its meridian."²

A terrible proof was given of the advance of popular independence, as opposed to the undefined exercise of royal prerogatives, in the reign of Richard II. It was terrible, because the struggle had the character about it of violence and injustice; and because it was chiefly forced on by the machinations of ambitious and discontented nobles, whose evil passions incited them to attempts which the gradual enlightenment of the nation at large would have rendered unnecessary, even in the cause of freedom. It is observed by Hume, that "the circumstances of this event, compared with those which attended the revolution in 1688, show the difference between a great and civilized nation, deliberately vindicating its established privileges, and a turbulent and barbarous aristocracy plunging headlong from the extremes of one faction into those of another." When, however, the different condition of the country at the two periods is considered, the wonder will be, not at the different manner in which the two revolutions were brought about, but at their similarly tranquil results.

The reign of Henry IV. was remarkable for its stern and even calmness. He acted in many respects like an absolute monarch, but secretly he yielded much to the popular cause. His conduct in reducing the power of the nobles was a master-piece of policy in respect to the throne, but it was a far greater benefit to the people than to himself. "His title being exclusively founded upon a revolution, he was compelled to adopt popular principles, and to magnify the parliamentary authority from which his own was derived. His most arbitrary measures were proposed under colour of a necessity, which prevented them from growing into precedents subversive of the constitution. The princes of his house, by patronising principles favourable to their own title, promoted the subsequent progress of liberty; although their measures of government, considered in their motives and in their immediate effects, are entitled to no more commendation than those of most other monarchs of their age."³ Henry was not a popular monarch either in his disposition or his actions; and the good which the nation acquired in his reign was the fruit of its own energy, which had created a condition of things in which justice and freedom were no longer to be the gifts of the sovereign's magnanimity, but the staple commodity of the commonwealth.

In the military triumphs of Henry V. we trace the still enlarging power of the country, and the strengthening of its bulwarks by the patriotism of the people. The other events of his reign exhibit the mighty struggle which was going on between the barbarous principles of intolerance and arbitrary power, and those to which the nation was indebted for all its bright and cheering prospects. Religious light is too frequently the last good which a people rapidly pressing forward in the pursuit of wealth or liberty aim at obtaining. Religious truth, and the duties which pertain to its free diffusion, are consequently seldom established in their minds so soon as those which relate to their property as citizens. We ought not, therefore, to be greatly surprised,

² Hist. of the Common Law.

³ Sir J. Mackintosh.

perhaps, that while a constant effort was made on the part of the people to increase their power, and limit the prerogatives of the crown, they willingly, for the most part, assented to the most horrible exercise of authority when the title of Lollard or heretic could be applied to the victim. But fearfully did the nation pay for this dark and slothful compliance with the enemies of toleration.

The reign of Henry VI., as indeed the whole period from Henry VI. to that of Richard III., was stormy and sanguinary. Insurrections and a civil war,—a fierce and ruinous struggle, which ended, not in the triumph of the people, but in the exaltation of a prince whose whole course was one of splendid vanity. “For the faithful and loving hearts,” said he, “and also the great labours that ye have borne and sustained towards me in the recovering of the said right and title which I now possess, I thank you with all my heart, and if I had any better good to reward you withal than my body, ye should have it, the which shall always be ready for your defence, never sparing nor letting for no jeopardy, praying you all of your hearty assistance and good countenance, as I shall be unto you very rightwise and loving liege lord.” But courteous as were these assurances, the nation received no benefit at his hands.

The reign of Edward IV., it is observed by Mr Hallam, “is the first during which no statute was passed for the redress of grievances, or maintenance of the subject’s liberty.” Unfortunately, the influence of his example, and the blind pleasure which men take in pomp and show, loosened the nerves of the nation. “Both lords and commons,” says Dr Lingard, “during his reign, instead of contending like their predecessors for the establishment of rights, and the abolition of grievances, made it their principal study to gratify the royal pleasure.” The consequences of this were soon felt. As the kingdom was now situated, the only firm security of legitimate authority lay in the freedom and improvement of the people. The overthrow of his family,—the usurpation of Richard III.,—and the disastrous contentions which had to be endured before tranquillity was restored,—were the almost inevitable result of such a reign as that of Edward the Fourth’s. Nor can we believe that the country would so soon have righted itself, had it not been for the possession of some remaining intelligence in the community, and an intrinsic fitness in the yet infant policy to establish its liberties on a firm basis.

The very first debate of the commons on the accession of Henry VII., furnishes some curious matter in illustration of the advancement which the public mind had, by that time, made in sound political feeling. There was a strong bias on the part of the lawyers to question every measure, even those which most intimately regarded the sovereign himself, till rule or precedent could be brought to justify it. On the other hand, there was enough of plain, practical wisdom, and a sufficient quick-sightedness on the side of the people to prevent their becoming the dupes of mere technical niceties and distinctions. When, therefore, it was found impossible to define the right by which Henry was to be considered the legal possessor of the crown, all classes very wisely indicated their consent in silence to forget the flaw in his title, that they might enjoy, with the better security, the peace and prosperity which his elevation brought them.

In pursuing the history of literature, the mind is continually disposed to question the truth of the statements which philosophers and critics have made as to the causes of its prosperity or decline. Like the plants most useful to mankind, it is found to flourish under a vast variety of circumstances; and in proportion to this its apparent hardihood, is the difficulty of determining with precision the principles by which it is acted upon from without. The most absolute monarchies as well as the freest republics have had their poets and their annalists: the most frugal and the most luxurious nations have shown themselves alike favourable to its growth: and, in a similar manner, taste and genius have been found wanting in the most prosperous as well as in declining states. The different principalities of Germany, and the republics of Italy, afford ample proof of this proposition on a small scale; and the literary history of nations presents a similar result, less obvious perhaps and striking, but not the less curious and convincing.

The difficulty, however, here alluded to, is less in the earlier than in the later periods of inquiry. This is equally the case with the literature of England, France and Italy. We are enabled through the common national records of these countries to trace their progress in intellectual refinement with satisfaction and accuracy, and, in many respects, assign a cause for their improvement up to the period when society assumed a new aspect, and the minds of men became subject to indirect influences sufficient in strength and number to outweigh or modify the more natural and obvious causes of advancement. In Italy, the cradle of modern literature, learning and the muses followed closely on the track of reviving order and liberty. The excitement which belongs to periods in which new commonwealths begin to feel conscious of their strength is almost in all cases favourable to the creation of a literature. Speculation is then awake,—thought has ample room for exertion,—truth has few enemies,—and hope is bold and vigorous. A strong, practical sense of poetry is thence generated. The people at large blend with their activity a desire of intelligence which renders them attentive to every one who can present a new idea or lead them to new experiments. Genius can, therefore, never lie dormant in such times. Every thing is in favour of its developement—there is nothing, when it comes forth, to daunt or lower it. The situation of the Italian republics in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was precisely that which fosters the human mind into confidence, and gives the highest possible value to knowledge. Before the end of the twelfth century, the states of Lombardy abounded in men whose profound acquaintance with civil law indicated an advancement in intellectual pursuits as extensive as it was rapid.¹ By the middle of the thirteenth century, poetry and the fine arts began to exhibit their powers; and the close of that period beheld the triumphs of a Cimabue, a Giotto, and a Dante.² Shortly after appeared Petrarch and Boccaccio, two men not more admirable as writers, than as scholars and patrons of learning. Taking advantage of the increasing intelligence of their countrymen, they employed their energy and various talents in strengthening the inclination for study which was every where apparent. They were joined in this laudable endeavour by others who venerated them for their genius: the

¹ Tiraboschi *Storia della letter. Ital.* t. v. lib. 11. c. iv.

² Lanzi *Storia Pittorica.* t. i. p. 15.

classics began to be studied with care and enthusiasm: the arrival of learned Greeks from Constantinople was the signal for commencing the study of Homer and Plato: manuscripts were collected, professorships instituted, and in a few years, Italy could boast of a race of poets and scholars whose names would for ever remain venerable in the history of literature. France, in the mean time, was making considerable progress in similar studies; but the circumstances of the country were different, and it was chiefly to the university of Paris, and the concourse of distinguished men to that celebrated seat of learning, that she owed her importance in the literary world. Theology, with all the auxiliary studies of scholastic logic and metaphysics, formed the chief pursuit of the university; but these branches of learning were cultivated with a diligence which rendered the intellect of the patient scholar as acute as it was active, and when a disposition is felt to ridicule the subtleties of logic, it should be remembered, that in the age when it was most in fashion to employ that science, the acuteness which it gave was, in some measure at least, a safe-guard against the wild and vague reveries of superstition.

While France and Italy were thus rapidly advancing to a period of great intellectual refinement, England also reaped some advantage from the opening of those sources of instruction to which they were indebted for their improvement. Nor was its political condition altogether unfavourable to the progress of knowledge. William the Conqueror had introduced a race of men into the country who were accustomed to regard themselves as sovereigns of the lands which were given them as the wages of their valour. The laws which oppressed the conquered inhabitants abridged not the freedom of these Norman soldiers; and when the Saxon spirit revived and mingled itself with that which inspired the Norman knights and barons with their love of independence, a desire for, and a knowledge of liberty were produced, which had an important influence on the moral and intellectual as well as political state of the community. The grand contest of the barons with King John affords a plain indication of the firm and continued growth of this feeling; and when to this were added the advantages soon after derived from increasing wealth, from intercourse with foreign countries, from the establishment of distinguished scholars in many of the important posts of government, England was placed in a state well-calculated for the nourishment of the first seeds of literature. It was long, however, before the materials of learning were brought into this country, or obtained any general circulation. As late as the year 1299, we find a bishop of Winchester borrowing a bible of the cathedral-convent of St Swithin, and giving a bond, couched in the most formal terms, for its return. Warton observes, in speaking of the same period, that when a book was bequeathed to any one by will, it was seldom without several restrictions and stipulations: that if a person presented a book to a religious house, he offered it with great solemnity on the altar, and considered that the gift merited eternal salvation: that the most terrible anathemas were pronounced against those who should be guilty of taking a book presented to a religious house, and, as an instance of this, it is stated, that the prior and convent of Rochester declared, that they would every year pronounce the irrevocable sentence of damnation on him who should purloin or conceal a Latin translation of Aristotle's

physics, or even obliterate the title.³ The manner in which the purchase of a book was made corresponded with the high idea thus entertained of its value. It was usual when such an article of property was to be disposed of, to collect several persons of the greatest respectability together as witnesses, and their names were recorded in the deed of purchase. The learned writer above named quotes two or three documents of this kind, and which bear a much later date than that above alluded to. Thus, in a manuscript of the book of the sentences of Peter Lombard, appears the following: "This book of the sentences belongs to Master Roger archdeacon of Lincoln, which he bought of Geoffrey the chaplain, brother of Henry vicar of Northelkington, in the presence of Master Robert de Lee, Master John of Lirling, Richard of Luda, clerk, Richard the almoner, the said Henry the vicar, and his clerk, and others: and the said archdeacon gave the said book to God and saint Oswald, and to Peter abbot of Barton, and the convent of Barden!" A still more striking instance of the value or scarcity of books occurs in the statutes of St Mary's college, Oxford, in which it is ordered "that no one should retain a book in the library, or cause it to be retained above an hour, or two hours at the most, lest others should be hindered from the sight, or study of the same."

This want of books was the most formidable obstacle with which the students of the 13th and 14th centuries had to strive; but the facts above stated lead to the important discovery that their value was beginning to be estimated aright, and that it was considered an object worthy of the most wealthy and the most powerful to collect them. Men of letters enjoyed the advantage of libraries much earlier on the continent than in England; there were greater facilities there for the collection of manuscripts both Greek and Latin, and the communication of knowledge was proportionately more rapid. We find, consequently, that but few native Englishmen had risen into notice, when Edward the First began his reign, and that literature, at that period, had not yet been able by its genial influence to tame the violent passions and prejudices of the age. His career, though one of military splendour, and productive of important political advantages to the country, did not tend to soften the feelings, or enlarge the views of the great body of his subjects. The wars with Wales and Scotland kept up the haughty spirit of the higher classes, and the fierce brutality of the lower. Education opposes the interest of monarchs intent on military aggrandisement, in as much as it renders the people too enlightened to be managed in mass; and thus both the policy of the king, and the agitations consequent on war, will almost invariably prevent the progress of general improvement in such reigns as that of Edward the First.

There was one feature, however, in the policy of that monarch which deserves particular mention, as it outweighed many of the circumstances most unfavourable to the literature of that period. It was the impulse then given to the study of the law. The importance of this science at the dawn of learning can scarcely be too highly estimated. Less capable of being misrepresented than the sublime truths of theology, but sufficiently grave and dignified in their purposes, the principles of legal study are admirably calculated to strengthen the mind, and lead to the forma-

³ Dissertation on the Introduction of Learning into England.

tion of a habit of close and extensive observation. Tiraboschi remarks the great and beneficial influence which the early pursuit of this branch of learning had in Italy;⁴ and Mr Stewart speaks still more decidedly to the same effect. "No study," says he, "could then have been presented to the curiosity of men, more happily adapted to improve their taste, to enlarge their views, or to invigorate their reasoning powers; and although, in the first instance, prosecuted merely as the subject of a weak and undistinguishing idolatry, it nevertheless conducted the student to the very confines of ethical as well as of political speculation; and served, in the mean time, as a substitute of no inconsiderable value for both these sciences. Accordingly we find, that, while in its immediate effects it powerfully contributed, wherever it struck its roots, by ameliorating and systematizing the administration of justice, to accelerate the progress of order and of civilization, it afterwards furnished, in the farther career of human advancement, the parent-stock on which were grafted the first rudiments of pure ethics, of liberal politics, taught in modern times."⁵ The encouragement, therefore, which was given to legal studies in the reign of Edward the First, is the principal circumstance on which the literary historian will fix his eye; and the remark made by Sir Edward Coke, that it was not till this period that the English law assumed any appearance of regularity or strictness in its principles, will be regarded as worthy of no slight attention.

That, with the exception of this branch of learning, knowledge was pursued at this period but in the most superficial manner, we have the testimony of the notable Friar Bacon himself. In the account he gives of his studies to Pope Clement IV. when dedicating his '*Opus Majus*' to that pontiff, he says, that he had expended altogether forty years in the acquisition of knowledge, but that he would undertake to teach any man of diligence, moderate capacity, and willing mind, all the learning he possessed in the space of half-a-year. The mystery which appears on the face of such an assertion, he explains away by expressing his conviction, that he could teach his pupil enough Hebrew in three days to understand the Scriptures, and that it would not take a longer time to make him acquainted with Greek, so that he might comprehend whatever had been written in that language. With regard to the sciences, geometry he considers could be taught in a week, and arithmetic in no time at all. Of course these expressions are to be taken as those of a man humbled at the discovery which his own superior mind and experience had enabled him to make of the narrowness of the scope to which the science of the age was confined. The testimonies borne to his learning by many eminent scholars afford a proof that, whatever were the difficulties with which he had to contend, he had overcome them as far as they were to be subdued by human intellect. Bishop Jewel instances his work '*De Idiomatico Linguarum*,' as a proof that he was able to judge of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew tongues.⁶ Dr Friend, in his history of physic,⁷ not only says, that "he was the miracle of the age he lived in," but that he was "the greatest genius perhaps for mechanical knowledge which ever appeared in the world since the time of Archimedes." The same writer observes the little notice which is taken of this remarkable man by the historians of his time, and exclaims with just

⁴ Storia, t. iii. lib. iv. c. 7.

⁵ Dissertation i. c. 1.

⁶ Defence of the Apology. Pt. iv. c. 15.

⁷ Part ii. p. 235.

indignation that "so extraordinary a genius would surely have as well deserved to have had a place in their writings, as the detail of a blazing star, or a bloody shower, which they never fail to register at large; and that it might perhaps have been of as much use and pleasure to the reader, as a long recital of the rise and fall of a great minister, or the wars and victories of our kings."

The remarks of Bacon on the limited extent of his knowledge, taken in connection with the circumstance, that because of that which he possessed he was regarded as a magician by his countrymen, throws great light on the general state of learning in England at the period of which we are speaking. But it is not to be lost sight of, that Bacon received a great part of his education at Oxford; and that, though he resided and studied some time at Paris, it was in the retirement of the former university that he made most of the acquisitions which have bestowed such celebrity on his name. This circumstance forcibly shows how important an influence the establishment of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge had on the progress of both literature and science. The libraries they as yet possessed were very small, but they afforded an incomparably wider field for research than would have been opened to the student without their establishment. No private individual could have collected a sufficient number of books for carrying on the simplest branch of inquiry, and it would have been vain for him in those days, to seek a retirement sufficiently secure from vulgar intrusion to enable him to pursue his inquiries in tranquillity or safety. The Franciscans had, a few years before the accession of Edward, begun to distinguish themselves at Oxford; and an anecdote related of one of the superiors of their house there, will serve to show how great a conflict had yet to take place between scholasticism and natural or practical science. Going one day into the school where the celebrated Robert Grosseteste was then lecturing, he found the pupils rehearsing, as it was termed, their questions. To his surprise he heard that the subject of their exercise was Whether there is a God? "Alas, alas!" he exclaimed with unaffected disgust, "ignorant simplicity is daily gaining heaven, while these learned disputants are arguing about the existence of heaven's Master." Anxious, it is said, to prevent his pupils from so dangerous a waste of their time and ingenuity, he immediately sent to Rome, and obtained for them the best copies that could be procured of the Decretals.⁸ To the diligence of the Franciscans is ascribed the large collection of manuscripts which was soon afterwards made to the great benefit of literature. Nor was Bacon the only Englishman of celebrity who belonged to this order. It numbered in its ranks Alexander Hales, the master of Duns Scotus, and of the learned Italian doctor and cardinal, Bonaventura, a man who is said to have been only second to Aquinas himself. Leland describes Hales as both a philosopher and a theologian of the highest worth, and states—which is important to our purpose—that his lectures were attended by a numerous auditory who regarded him as little less than a divinity.⁹ This popularity of our accomplished and erudite scholar proves that there was already a class of persons in the kingdom who had sufficient inclination, as well as leisure, to devote themselves to literary pursuits, and that what was now chiefly wanting

⁸ Berington's Lit. Hist. of Mid. Ages, p. 364. ⁹ *Commentarii de Script. Britt.* p. 253.

for the rapid advancement of the nation in intellectual refinement was peace, and the appearance of writers, who leaving the obscure paths of study should win philosophy to converse on themes of which every heart could comprehend the value.

The firm footing which Aristotle and the schoolmen still kept in all the great avenues to knowledge left this task in a great measure to the poets; but the writers of that class who appeared in the reign of Edward the First possessed few of those graces which were likely to secure popularity to their works. The most distinguished of them were Robert of Gloucester, and Robert Mannyng, or Robert de Brunne. Both these writers composed a metrical chronicle of England, commencing with the most fabulous period of its history. It is generally allowed that neither of these productions possesses much poetical merit, and that they afford but a discouraging specimen of the progress of the language. They contain, however, a plentiful store of traditionary tales, intermixed with some practical precepts of wisdom which could hardly fail of proving useful and acceptable in the age when they appeared. Still more closely allied with the affairs of life were the ballads produced at this period, in some of which there is a vein of satire which we should hardly have looked for at such a period. It is remarked by Warton, that the character of English poetry began to be changed about this time; that fictitious adventures were now substituted in the place of merely historical or traditionary incidents; and that the rude simplicity of the native English was gradually yielding to a more ornamental style of expression.¹⁰

In the reign of Edward the Second, the taste for poetical romance gained new strength, and forms the principal feature in the literary annals of the period. It had long been the custom with persons of rank and wealth to entertain minstrels in their houses; and the passion for the poetry of romance increased with the means for its gratification. The crusades had given birth to events well-adapted of themselves to the purposes of poetry, and had aided the importation of those new and gorgeous materials of verse which in no age could have failed to delight and captivate the imagination. There is also a circumstance which well-deserves to be considered, but which does not appear to have attracted the attention it deserves. Most of the wealthiest families in England could by this time boast of having had some member of their house celebrated in the histories of the day for his prowess in the fields of Syria. The just pride of some, the vanity of others, and the sympathy of all, would thus be strongly excited by every allusion to events in which their personal feelings could so easily find an interest. Romance thence became something more than the luxury of youthful minds, or the amusement of the gay and indolent. The minstrel who could invent with ingenuity a tale of chivalry, had it in his power to confer honour on the most exalted rank, and as the refinement of manners increased, the distinction bestowed by his art would become more and more esteemed. The reign of Edward the Second was ill-adapted for the advancement of learning, or any species of literature, but the seed of knowledge is not prevented from vegetat-

¹⁰ Hist. vol. i. p. 111.

ing while it is yet in the ground, though the plants it afterwards produces may be blighted.

In the splendid reign of the succeeding monarch, both poetry and philosophy sprung rapidly forth. The works of Occam and of Burley, —the one honoured by his contemporaries with the title of the 'invincible doctor,' the other with that of the 'perspicuous doctor,'—bear testimony to the keen appetite with which the studies of the schools were pursued, while the numerous metrical romances which bear the date of this period attest with equal force the advancing state of our poetry. The abolishment of the use of French in legal affairs which took place in this reign, had no doubt an important influence on the literature of the country. That language had been hitherto cultivated by the learned as only second to Latin for the purpose of communicating their ideas, and Grosseteste and other poets employed it in their most admired and popular compositions. Had the English been thus brought into use among the higher classes of the nation at an earlier period, it would not, it may be conjectured, have so rapidly acquired the strength and polish for which it was soon after distinguished. But the refinement of manners which took place in this reign, the elegance which characterized the amusements of Edward's court, and the general diffusion of a taste for poetry by means of the new romances, rendered its cultivation when thus introduced a matter of necessity; and we consequently find that the language of the writers who lived but a short time previous to the present period, can bear no comparison either for force or harmony with that of the poets who now laid the foundations of our national literature. The names of Chaucer and Gower, with some of minor note, as those of Richard Hampole and Robert Longlande, afford ample proof of this commencement of a new era; and in the succeeding reign we see both poetry and every other branch of literature exercising a powerful influence on manners and opinions, the best and truest sign of the simultaneous progress of knowledge and civilization. Those branches of science, however, which bear most directly on the affairs of human life, were as yet but little cultivated or understood; and it is related that such was the ignorance of even the best instructed classes on the subject of geography, that when Lewis of Spain was made prince of the Fortunate Isles, or the Canaries, by Clement VI., the English ambassador at Rome, together with his retinue, thought that it must be England which the pope had given away, and hastened home with the terrible news. The historian couples this notable anecdote with the information given by Speed, that there were then thirty thousand students in the university of Oxford alone, and asking what was the occupation of all these young men? answers, "To learn very bad Latin, and still worse logic."¹¹

A somewhat exaggerated account is here given of the number of students, if we take that word to mean only such as actually frequented the university for the purposes of knowledge. But making allowance for those who were mere idlers in the place, a very striking proof is afforded by the above statement of the rapid progress which a taste for literature was making in the nation. With regard to their learning only very bad Latin and worse logic, it may be observed, that nothing

¹¹ Hume, vol. ii. p. 472.

could be taught in the universities but such branches of knowledge as the age possessed, and that such institutions are generally known not to be remarkable for anticipating the world in discoveries of practical importance. But that very bad Latin was taught may be fairly disputed. England had already produced some writers in that language whose compositions will bear the examination of severe criticism, and who employed it on subjects which required a fluency and grace of expression not to be obtained without a profound acquaintance with all its niceties. John of Salisbury, author of the *Policraticon*, Alexander Neckham, who wrote a poem on Divine Wisdom in seven books, and above all, Joseph of Exeter, whose musical and elegant verses are universally admired,¹² were examples in Latinity which could not be without their influence; and though the taste of the age led the greater number to study Statius and Ovid rather than Virgil, there is no doubt but that the Latin language was written by the scholars of the time with considerable taste as well as fluency.

It is not so easy, perhaps, to soften the historian's aspersion of the logical studies of the university; but happily for the interests of truth, those principles were about to manifest themselves which, by bringing every species of knowledge to the test of sound reason and historical testimony, assign to artificial rules of argument the precise place and value they ought to hold in the intellectual system. With the poets and philosophers who graced the reigns of Edward the Third, and of the unfortunate Richard the Second, appeared a man whose noble talents, and the part he performed in life, give him a right to the highest stand among the celebrated personages of the time. Wickliffe was profoundly learned,—he was not less acquainted with Aristotle than the most bigoted schoolmen, but he saw that logic could have nothing to do with the foundations of religious truth—as Bacon did in a subsequent age,—that it could never properly be made the vehicle by which to arrive at the knowledge of nature. So great was the esteem he acquired by the various and deep stores of erudition which he possessed, that his elevation to the professorship of divinity was effected in defiance of the whole body of the mendicants. This indicates not only the influence he must have himself enjoyed in the university, but the change which was gradually going on in the feelings and opinions of the nation at large. The mode of teaching which he pursued greatly contributed to accelerate this change, and while it tended to establish religion on its only proper basis, could scarcely fail of opening the most unwilling eyes to the hindrances which the other modes of scholastic instruction opposed to the spread of information. Above all things, his translation of the Scriptures acted as an engine of immeasurable force in dissipating the dense clouds of error against which human ingenuity must have ever proved unavailing. A love of reading, and even a disposition for inquiry, was thereby diffused among every class of the community; and the taste thus inspired, springing from the strongest feelings of the human heart, and being fed with the healthiest nourishment the understanding can receive, would be far more permanent than a similar principle implanted among the people by means of a different kind. The effects of his labours in this respect may be well understood from what

¹² Warton on the Introduction of Learning in England, p. 163.

is said of them by an adversary : " Christ," observes Knyghton, " committed the gospel to the clergy and doctors of the church that they might minister it to the laity and weaker persons, according to the exigency of times and persons' wants ; but this Master John Wickliffe translated it out of Latin into English, and by that means laid it more open to the laity and to women who could read than it used to be to the most learned of the clergy, and those of them who had the best understanding. And so the gospel-pearl is cast abroad and trodden under swine ; and that which used to be precious to both clergy and laity, is made, as it were, the common jests of both, and the jewel of the church is turned into the sport of the laity " The state of things here described presents a strange contrast to that which prevailed in the country a very few years before ; and the careful observation of this period of our national history will afford the inquirer light for a considerable portion of the path he has to explore, till he arrive at the greater era of change and reformation. In the earlier periods of English history or biography, that of which we are now speaking is, therefore, by far the most interesting. The preceding portion is sometimes wrapped in obscurity, and when it presents a clear surface for observation, the energies of the human mind are seen lying dormant under the grievous oppression of superstition, or wholly employed on some one object of immediate desire. In the portion which intervenes between the period we are upon and the reign of Henry the Eighth, we see but the developement of principles now beginning to operate—the employment of agents of which the power was now for the first time discovered. Liberty, though still subject to violence, drew strength from the circulation of intelligence ; learning, as we have seen, though still having her home in the cloister and the schools, began to go abroad in the world ; and while much of the wealth of the higher ranks was expended in pleasure, a part of it was employed in the encouragement of architecture, and the other branches of the fine arts. Poets found a patron unknown to their predecessors. A public now existed, and Chaucer and his contemporaries were respected by the great as men who could find a brighter fame in the world than in princely halls. The cultivation of poetry thence became an occupation in which persons of wealth and independence might engage without becoming classed with the minstrel-flatterers whom they succeeded. Both Chaucer and Gower were engaged through life in the duties of an arduous profession, and their compositions abound in proofs that they found better materials for poetry in their intercourse with the world at large, than they could have collected in the courts of the greatest monarchs.

Among the prose writers of the period, Henry Knyghton and Ralph Higden devoted themselves to historical composition. But history requires a more advanced stage of society, of knowledge and philosophy, than poetry. It makes no sudden approaches towards perfection,—the wisdom it works on is accumulated rather than discovered, and England had yet to see several generations of eminent poets and philosophers succeed each other before the appearance of an historian of corresponding merit. Of the men who, in addition to their own labours, contributed by their patronage to advance the cause of improvement at this period, one deserves especial mention, William of Wykeham, who, by the foundation of the college at Winchester, and of New College, Oxford,

set a noble example to the wealthy churchmen of the country, and placed the importance of education as one of the gifts of rich benevolence in a proper point of view.

Not a single poet of any repute graced the reign of Henry the Fourth. The only writer deemed worthy of mention is Johannes Cusellanus; and his claim to notice rests wholly on a translation of the treatise of Boethius, 'De Consolatione Philosophiæ' into English verse. Henry, however, is stated not to have been without literary taste. He invited to England Christine de Pisan, distinguished as one of the most elegant memoir writers of France.¹³ His conduct towards the young prince of Scotland, afterwards James I., is a still better instance of the respect he entertained for literature, and of the state of education in his reign. James having been taken prisoner in his passage from France, whither he had been sent by his father while very young, was kept a prisoner in England eighteen years; but during that time "he was so instructed and taught," says Hall, "by his schoolmasters and pedagogues appointed to him by the sole clemency of Henry IV., that he not only flourished in good learning and fresh literature, but also excelled in all points of martial feats, musical instruments, poetical art, and liberal sciences, insomuch, that at his return from captivity, he furnished his realm with both good learning and civil policy, which before was barbarous, savage, rude, and without all good nurture."¹⁴

The son and successor of Henry IV. was a far more decided patron of letters than that monarch himself. Having been educated at Oxford under the care of his uncle, Cardinal Beaufort, he was versed in the principal sciences of the age, and had acquired a respect for learning and ability which rendered him an intelligent as well as willing protector of men of genius. Both Lydgate and Occleve acknowledge him as their patron. The former in his prologue to the translation of the History of Troye, declares, that it was only at the command of the king that he would venture on the work, but that the monarch insisted upon his attempting it:

Because that he had joye and deuitye
To reade in bokes of old antiquitye.¹⁵

Nor is it but of the most magnificent patrons that poets are in the custom of writing in such a style as that in which he speaks of the king's likeness to his father:—

He eldest son is of the noble king,
Henry the Fourth of knighthood well and spring.
In whom is shewed of what stock he grew,
The rootis vertue can thus the set renew:
In every parte the tarage is the same,
Like his father of manners and of name.

Occleve addresses him in terms still more flattering:—

Hye and noble prynce excellent!
My lord, the prince! O my lord gracious!

¹³ Turner's Hist. of England during Mid. Ages, vol. ii. p. 360.

¹⁴ Warre of Troye, p. 1.

¹⁵ Ibid. note.

I, humble servaunt, and obedient
 Unto your estate, hye and glorious,
 Of which I am full tendir and full jelous,
 Me recomende unto your worthynesse,
 With hert entier, and spirite of mekenesse.

The historian, Walsingham, accuses Occleve of heresy, but Pits observes,¹⁶ that he would not decide on the single testimony of that writer, and gives him the unmixed praise of having been one of the first of our poets who imitated Chaucer in polishing the English language. If Walsingham's supposition, indeed, was correct, we should have a curious instance of the complacency of the literary men of those days; but when it is considered, even that Occleve was the known friend and scholar of Chaucer, we can scarcely suppress a feeling of surprise at the manner in which he commends the king's conduct towards the unfortunate man at the burning of whom the monarch was present:—

My lord the prynce, God him save and blesse,
 Was at his dedilly castigation.
 And of his soule had grete tendirnesse;
 Thurstyng sore his salvacion.
 Grete was his piteous lamentacion,
 When this renegade would not blynne
 Of the stynking errour that he was ynne.

But, notwithstanding the favour which Henry the Fourth and his distinguished successor displayed towards the poets, learning is reported to have rather declined than advanced during their reigns, of which signs could be discovered at an earlier date. Wood assigns as one of the chief reasons for this circumstance, the power which the popes exercised in the English church. Let it not be presumed, he observes, that we were without some apology. When the Roman bishops conferred our benefices and our ecclesiastical dignities on strangers, while even our most learned men spent their days without profit, or were compelled to skulk under the monkish cowl, what inducement was there to pursue studies in themselves not possessed of any charm?¹⁷ But this could scarcely be considered the cause of the decline in literature, at the period of which we are speaking. Henry the Fifth paid particular attention to ecclesiastical affairs, and though blind to the doctrinal errors of Rome, was not of a character to allow any interference on the part of the pope with the management of the national church. The archbishopric of Canterbury was no sooner vacant, than he promoted to that see the celebrated Henry Chicheley, to whose boldness and vigour the English church was in a great measure indebted for the preservation of its liberties. Both he and Waynflete, bishop of Winchester, followed the example of Wykeham, and founded colleges.¹⁸ But the interests of literature were not to be secured by these means alone. Henry the Fifth, in his ambition to acquire renown as a conqueror, lost sight of the virtues which better became the king as well as the man. With all his accomplishments and his supposed respect for learning, he was not less the slave of bigotry than the most uneducated of his subjects. In his reign the Lollards were made to feel the utmost fury of their enemies,

¹⁶ *De Illus. Ang. Scriptoribus*, p. 537.

¹⁷ *History of Oxford*, 1306, &c. ¹⁸ *Berington Lit. Hist.* p. 503, 504.

and truth and justice were taught the bitter lesson, that they might plead in vain if they came to the bar with religion.

In such a state of things, learning and philosophy could not but retrograde. They may far better advance when opposed by error than has been undisturbedly gathering strength for centuries, than when met by prejudices which have been shaken, but are re-asserting their authority. From the period of which we are now speaking, down to that of the Reformation, truth had to struggle perpetually against the worst enemies both of moral and intellectual good. The love of chivalry had given a seeming sanctification to war, and the polish which society derived from its precepts of gallantry, legitimized the most odious vices. It was from the lips of licentious soldiers that youth were to learn the rules of life,—from courtly women they were to derive their knowledge of religion. The aid of the scholar and the churchman was not required till his education was complete, and he waited to have his sword laid on the altar. It was only in the pomp and ceremony of the institution that religion had any thing to do with chivalry; but the church was satisfied with the part it was allowed to take in the management of the order, and for the zeal which the knight professed in the defence of its rights, it consented to believe that the cross he bore on his shield was a true emblem of his heart and conduct. Catholicism, thus indulgent to the false but glittering system which exercised so powerful an influence over manners, inspired the schoolmen with a more determined love of Aristotle and his logic,—continually forged new chains to keep down the rising spirit of inquiry,—taught the people to regard Roger Bacon as a magician, Wickliffe as a pest to society, and all who presumed to doubt the infallibility of the pope, as the ministers of Satan.

To these causes may be ascribed the slow progress which literature made during two or three reigns after that of Edward the Third, compared with its state at that period. In the reign of Henry the Sixth, Lydgate, still the principal poet of the age, was chiefly engaged in translating from the French, or in versifying traditions to gratify the vanity of monks. What portion of classical learning he possessed, was mixed up with the wildest fables of romance, and the principal Greek writers are named by him almost in the same manner as the old heroes of chivalry. There was, however, no indifference on the part of the people to the improvement of minstrelsy, and Warton adduces evidence to prove that the minstrels of this age were not unfrequently better paid than the clergy. In the year 1430, at the feast of the fraternity of the 'Holie Crosse,' at Abingdon, in Berkshire, twelve priests are stated to have received only fourpence each for singing a dirge, while the twelve minstrels who took a part in the amusements, were paid two shillings and fourpence each, besides being provided with refreshment for themselves and horses. Another case of a similar kind which occurred eleven years after, is adduced to show the same remarkable fact. Eight priests who were hired from Coventry to assist at a ceremony in the church at Mantoke, were paid but two shillings each, while the six minstrels engaged on the same occasion, received each of them double that sum, and were allowed to sup with the sub-prior of the monastery in the painted chamber, which was lit up by the chamberlain with eight large wax tapers. The want of respect for ecclesiastics which this would seem to imply, is the more difficult to be explained when the

character of the age is considered. There was no indifference to the rites of the church on the part of the people, nor was there a deficiency of talent, considered without reference to their errors and prejudices, in the ruling members of the establishment. Some names occur in the history of the period which deserve a respectable place among English ecclesiastical writers. Such are those of Thomas Waldensis, of whom it is said, that his works were the repository whence subsequent controversialists drew many of their most favourite arguments;¹⁹ Walsingham the historian, Henry Chicheley, Waynflete, and others, who both by their ability and the energy with which they defended what was then the most popular side of the controversy, ought, it would seem, to have secured better patronage for their brethren. Had the inferior payment above mentioned been confined to the monks or priests engaged at ceremonies, we might have accounted for the circumstance by supposing that the ecclesiastics thus employed were usually the least learned members of the church; but we find that the same low rate of payment extended to preachers of some rank and learning. The prior of the monastery at Mantoke—who gave, as we have seen, four shillings to the minstrels who sung at his festival—paid a *doctor predicans* but sixpence for a sermon. The inference to be drawn from all this is, that the popular mind was yet in its infancy; that it had not yet begun to take any deep interest in subjects which require reflection; and that changes and improvements had to be looked for which should alter the state of the great mass of the people, before literature could be expected to advance with equal and steady steps.

The reign of Edward the Fourth commenced amid the confusion of civil war; and the jealousy of the monarch, combined with the tumultuary spirit which pervaded the nation, produced a state of things ill calculated to promote the cause of learning and general intelligence. How little freedom of speech the people enjoyed may in some measure be understood from an anecdote related of the king's conduct soon after he ascended the throne. A London shopkeeper to whose house was affixed the sign of the crown, laughingly said that his son should be heir to the crown. Strange to relate, Edward on being informed of the expression, directed that the unfortunate man should be apprehended, and soon after signed the order for his execution.²⁰ The prosperity, however, which attended the close of his reign was favourable to the improvement of the nation, and circumstances are on record which indicate an increasing respect for literature on the part of the higher ranks. Though the institution of the office of poet-laureate has contributed little to the improvement of the national muse, it served to mark, at the time when it was introduced, a higher degree of veneration for the poetical art than had existed in previous reigns. We have observed the respectability which literature appeared to be on the eve of acquiring in the times of Chaucer and Gower: since then minstrelsy seems to have been oftener heard of than any of the more genuine species of poetry; and it is a favourable sign of Edward the Fourth's regard for literature that we hear in his reign for the first time of a laureate poet. The custom of crowning successful bards had been early observed by the Provençals, and it had travelled from them into Germany and Italy. In some of

¹⁹ Pits. de Illust. Ang. Script. Leland. Com. de Script. Britt.

²⁰ Hume, vol. III. Ed. 1 V.

the places where it was adopted with greatest zeal, it appears to have been amalgamated with the mass of figurative rites and ceremonies, which rose out of the same state of feeling as those of chivalry and many of the catholic churches. In Italy, Petrarch had introduced it from a sentiment in which veneration for his art, self-love, and patriotism, had all a part. But wherever it prevailed, it invested the poet with a species of dignity which greatly enhanced the value of his calling, and placed him not only on a level with the scholars who figured in universities and academies, but with the men who boasted of their titles derived from courts and princes.²¹ Warton regards the appellation as it appears attached to the name of the king of England's poet, simply in the light of an academical distinction, and adduces numerous instances in which persons who took degrees in grammar at Oxford, were styled *Poete laureati*.²² It is, however, singular that no poet should have been mentioned before this time as king's laureate; and whether we consider the title as given by the monarch, or as enjoyed by this court-poet as his proper academical distinction, it is evident that it was a title of honour which had not been usually borne by persons occupying the office of royal bard.

Of the state of literature, the productions of the period give but a very unfavourable opinion. Harding's Chronicle, which stands foremost in the list, is characterised as "beneath criticism, and as fit only for the attention of an antiquary." But Harding was a man of some rank, had both experience and influence, and employed poetry, however little genius he possessed, on themes of interest and importance. A similar indication is given of the common employment of poetry on subjects of practical utility, by two other writers of the age; and it may be remarked, that one of the first and surest signs of growing intelligence, is the approach of one species of literature and one branch of science to another. Norton and Ripley, who were two of the most distinguished chemists of the day, both wrote poems on the mysteries of their art; and the rank which they held as scholars throws light on the state of natural philosophy at the time when they flourished. The learned Ashmole, who published their poems out of zeal for 'Hermetique science,' observes, that Norton is allowed to have been the greatest alchemist of the age, but that indecent and abusive censures have been passed by his biographers on the study in which he was skilled. "Indeed, every one," remarks the indignant editor, "that is educated a scholar, is not born to affect or be happy in every art; some love one, some another, but few all."²³ Norton himself thus speaks of his science, and it will be seen how strongly the theological spirit imbued what were considered in those days the highest branches of philosophy:

"Maistryfull, merveyulous, and archmastrye,
Is the tincture of holi alkimy;
A wonderfull science, secrete philosophie,
A singular grace and gift of th' Almightye;
Which never was founde by labour of man,
But it by teaching, or revelation begaun.
It was never for mony sold ne bought,
By any man which for it hath sought:

²¹ Selden on Titles of Honour.

²² Hist. vol. II. p. 441.

²³ Theatrum Chemicum, Notes, p. 437.

But given by an able man by grace,
 Wrought with greate cost, with long layair and space.
 It helpeth a man when he hath neede;
 It voydeth vain glory, hope, and also dreade;
 It voydeth ambitiousnesse, extorcion and excesse;
 It fenceth adversity that she doe not oppresse.
 He that thereof hath his full intent,
 Forsaketh extremities, with measure is content."

After replying to some of the objections to the art which, even in that day, it appears were current among the people, he says:—

" Therefore noe man shoulde be too swifte,
 To cast away our Lord's blessed gift:
 Considering how that Almighty God
 From great doctours hath this science forbod,
 And graunted it to few men of his mercy,
 Such as be faithful trew and lowly.
 And as there be but planets seaven
 Among the multitude of stars in Heaven,
 So among millions of millions of mankinde
 Scarslie seaven men maie this science finde.
 Wherefore Lay-men ye may lere and see
 How many Doctors of great authoritie,
 With many searchers hath this science sought,
 Yet all their labours have turned into nought;
 If thei did cost, yet found thei none availe,
 For of their purpose every tyme thei faile;
 And in despair thei reason and departe,
 And then thei said how there is noe such arte;
 But fained fables thei name it where thei goe,
 A fals fond thing thei say it is alsoe:
 Such men presume too much upon their minde,
 They weene their witts sufficient this arte to finde."

In the account he gives of the distinction between a true and a false alchemist, he lays down the following rules:—

" Now ye that will this science pursae,
 Learne ye to know fals men from trew.
 All trew searchers of this science of alkimy,
 Must be full learned in their first Philosophie:
 Else all their laboure shall them let and grieve,
 As he that fetcheth water in a sive;
 The trew men search and seeke all alone
 In hope to finde our delectable stone,
 And for that thei would that no man shulde have losse,
 They prove and seeke all at their own coste;
 Soe their own purses they will not spare,
 They make their coffers thereby full bare,
 With greate patience thei doe procede,
 Trusting only in God to be their speede."²¹

The other work to which we have alluded is similarly indicative of the character of a large class of learned men, who, about this time, struggled hard to advance the sciences, but expended their efforts in a wrong direction. Ripley's book is entitled, 'The Compound of Alchymie: a most excellent, learned, and worthy worke, written by Sir George Ripley, Chanon of Bridlington, in Yorkeshire, containing twelve Gates.' It is dedicated to King Edward the Fourth, whom the

²¹ Norton's Ordinall, p. 1—17.

author addresses in an epistle of great courtesy, and abounding in the praises of alchemy. His caution to the monarch respecting secrecy is a curious specimen of his style :—

“ For like it you to trust that trewlie I have found
The perfect waye of most secrete alchimy,
Which I wyll never trewly for merke ne for pounde
Make common but to you, and that conditionally
That to your selfe ye shall keep it full secretly,
And only it use as may be to God's pleasure,
Els in tyme comming, of God I should abyde
For my discovering of his secrete treasure.

Therefore advise you well wyth good delyberation ;
For of this secrete shall know none other creature
But onely you,—as I make faithfull protestation,
For all the tyme that I here in lyfe endure :
Whereto I wyll your Lordship me to ensure,
To my desyre in thys by othe to agree,
Least I should to me the wrath of God procure ;
For my revealing his greate gift and previtie.”²⁵



The language of the poem throughout is that of the chemists and other natural philosophers of the age, and affords a valuable index to the state of science at the time when it was written. In the ‘*Liber Patris Sapientiae*’ which follows, instructions are given in a phraseology which shows how little refinement had as yet been introduced into the language of even cultivated minds. Of the zeal with which, to their ruin, the adepts in alchemy pursued their object, some idea may be formed from this portion of his advice :—

“ If thou put out mony for any other thing,
It is to thy losse ; and to thy great hindring :
Except yt be for thy workers naturall foode,
Which is had out of stone, ayre and wood.”

The short reign of Edward the Fifth, and that of the usurper Richard, put a stop for a while to what few advantages literature and science had received from court patronage. No writer of eminence graced this period of fear and trouble, and the historian and biographer have to record the actions of those only who expended their ability and energy in opposing a domestic tyrant. A taste for versification had become pretty generally diffused, and there appears to have been no want of poets of an inferior class ; but they were the successors of the popular minstrels of a former age, and as they had the refuse only of legendary lore on which to work, they owed their temporary reputation to the charm which simple rhyme possesses among an uneducated people. There were, however, some few writers who occupied a station in society which would have prevented their seeking fame as authors, had not the nation been becoming every day more intelligent, and more capable of appreciating the worth of intellectual culture. William of Nassyngton, who translated a work on the Trinity into English verse, was a proctor in the ecclesiastical court at York ; the sister of Lord Berners, who was prioress of the nunnery of Sopewell, composed a work in English, on hawking, hunting, and armoury, or

²⁵ *Theatrum Chemicum*, p. 110.

heraldry; and what is still more worthy of observation, Robert Fabyan, who wrote a Chronicle, or Concordance of Histories, and some other works, was a London tradesman, who had served the offices of sheriff and alderman.

But this writer ought rather, perhaps, to be placed under the reign of Henry the Seventh, when the kingdom began to recover from the effects of the ruinous disorders to which it had been subjected, and knowledge received those important additions to its means of advancement which have ever since prevented it from retrograding. That education of a liberal order had become common among the middle ranks of society, is evident from the case of Fabyan himself, who, though a tradesman, was reputed for his classical acquirements. The numerous authorities, also, whom he quotes in his 'Concordance of Histories,' affords a proof that, by this time, the stores of general information were rapidly increasing, and becoming more and more familiar to the nation. It has been judiciously remarked, moreover, that though he was not altogether free from superstition, he was no great favourer of monastic institutions, or the legends they upheld. Thus, in speaking of the holy oil at Rheims, he says, "To this report every man may give credence as hym lyketh. For I fandē not this wryten in the Gospell, nor yet in no booke of Holy Scripture;"²⁶ an observation the more remarkable, as Fabyan does not appear to have ever associated himself with the Lollards.

It is plain from these circumstances, that the people of England were not unprepared to avail themselves of the new opportunities of improvement which were about to be afforded them. The invention of printing took place at a time when it seemed wanting to determine the vacillating energies of the nation to pursue the track of truth and science. Had it occurred during the destructive disturbances of war and civil tumult which engaged the minds of men in the cares of self-protection, the scholars of the day would probably have heard of it with unprofitable curiosity; the few calls of the public for literary works would not have been sufficient to show the value of the discovery, and the professional student would have been obliged to remain contented with his manuscripts. Had printing not been known till a later period, the increasing stream of thought and intelligence, wanting fitting channels through which to discharge itself, would have run to waste, and been lost on the surface of mere temporary topics, while the growing appetite for knowledge would have been daily tampered with by a few hardy speculatists, and would have only led by its keenness to the most absurd and dangerous expectations.

The employment of printing in this country was preceded by the rise of a very general taste for the classics. A notion had long prevailed among the few distinguished men who doubted the perfection of the old system, that the grammatical and critical study of the best ancient authors, would be more favourable to the mind, than its total confinement to the subtleties of logic. Jesus college at Cambridge was founded by Alcock, bishop of Ely, with an especial view to this object. Warton observes, that it is probable "that the academical pupils in grammar, with which the art of rhetoric was commonly

²⁶ The New Chron. of England and France, edit. by Ellis.

joined, instead of studying the real models of style, were chiefly trained in systematic manuals of these sciences, filled with unprofitable definitions, and unnecessary distinctions; and that, in learning the arts of elegance, they acquired the barbarous improprieties of diction which those arts were intended to remove and reform."²⁷ It is also well known that, when Dean Colet founded Saint Paul's school, such was the prejudice entertained by some of the heads of the church against the study of the classics, that a bishop declared that the place deserved to be styled a house of pagan idolatry. But both the bad taste, and the prejudices which had so long prevailed, gradually vanished as the communication with foreign countries for literary purposes became more frequent; as greater facilities were afforded for the perusal of the ancient writers, and the nation obtained sufficient repose to indulge in the pursuits of peace. The study of Greek was commenced in Oxford at the instigation of two of the most distinguished scholars of the period, Grocyn and Linacer. They were, however, violently opposed in their endeavours to impart to England the means of improvement which had already begun to operate so beneficially in Italy and France. For a long time the university was divided into two parties; those who favoured the new study taking to themselves the name of Grecians,—and its opponents as naturally assuming the appellation of Trojans. But too many circumstances operated on the side of the more erudite party to allow of its being exposed to a defeat, and besides the advantages it enjoyed from the better state of the nation, it derived no slight assistance from the character of the monarch himself. Bacon has beautifully as well as forcibly delineated the peculiarities of Henry's disposition. "He was," says he, "a prince, sad, serious, and full of thoughts and secret observations, and full of notes and memorials of his own hand, especially touching persons,—as whom to employ, whom to reward, whom to inquire of, whom to beware of, what were the dependencies, what were the factions, and the like,—keeping, as it were, a journal of his thoughts."²⁸ Of his pursuits, he remarks, that he was 'more studious than learned;' and, of his natural ability, that 'the sight of his mind was like some sights of eyes, rather strong at hand, than to carry afar off.'²⁹ Under a sovereign of this character men of learning and ability, especially if those qualities appeared conjoined with prudence, were more likely to find their talents duly appreciated than under one of a less cautious disposition. His acquirements, however, were sufficient to inspire him with a respect for letters; while the prosperity and calm which distinguished the latter years of his reign, left him at leisure to observe and examine the best methods of promoting both commerce and the arts. By his politic treatment of the nobles, the middle classes rose into wealth and consideration; and, though some of his regulations were founded perhaps on contracted views of government, and his love of accumulation induced him to encourage his ministers in an unworthy system of speculation, the nation found itself at the conclusion of his reign, surrounded with better prospects, and possessed of more numerous means of acquiring opulence, and securing its privileges than it had ever before enjoyed. The progress of improvement corresponded to these auspicious circumstances. More than one

²⁷ Hist. Sa. xvii. vol. ii.

²⁸ Hist. of Henry VII., Works, vol. v. p. 190.

²⁹ Id. 191.

species of popular amusement exhibited signs of advancing intelligence. The drama, though still in swathing clothes, and devoted to religious shows, began to be attended to with some care and taste. Grammar-schools were erected in almost every quarter of the kingdom; and a community was now in existence capable of foreseeing the advantages which would result to the next generation from such institutions. A great change, in fact, was on the eve of taking place, and the country seemed to feel conscious of its approach. A new order of things was about to call forth the whole strength of the national spirit, and it seemed to be already gathering together and preparing its forces for the better enjoyment of truth and liberty.

I. POLITICAL SERIES.

Edward II.

BORN A. D. 1238.—DIED A. D. 1307.

It is impossible to enter on the details and discussions connected with the biography, whether personal or political, of this distinguished monarch, without a conviction that we are treading new ground. Circumstances had occurred during the troubled reign of his father, which gave a determination to the course of events, not thereafter to be controlled, however it might be resisted or modified, by the ablest or most powerful rulers. The regency—ingenious, indeed, but still liable to the inherent infirmities of an imperfect authority—of Pembroke; the popular measures of de Montfort; and the fluctuating temper of Henry, had given to the people—*plebs*, as contradistinguished from *populus*—a feeling, with which it was perilous to trifle, of their weight and importance in all political calculations, and in every estimate of the national strength: nor was it among the least remarkable circumstances of the time, that the individual who was, in virtue of his rank, called to take the lead in this novel and critical state of things, was also eminently gifted in all the qualities necessary for the maintenance of his authority and influence amid doubtful claims and dangerous responsibilities. His personal advantages were not less conspicuous than his mental endowments. His commanding stature, sinewy frame, majestic countenance, and active movements, fitted him for the chieftainship of a spirited nation, warlike in its habits, conscious of its strength, tenacious of its rights, and struggling resolutely against the depressing and enthralling domination of prejudice and prerogative. Irascible and fierce in his resentments, he was yet singularly placable, and although firm of purpose, he gave way with the pliability of a seasoned politician to urgent and immediate considerations. Never were the 'uses of adversity' more happily exemplified than in his instance: young as he was when first compelled to engage in the strifes of war and policy, he proved himself equal to the emergency, nor was he less the affectionate son than the enlightened and energetic prince. He was the stay of his father's throne; the sharer of his captivity; and he ulti-

mately rescued him from his enemies, and established his authority on a firm foundation.

His early youth appears to have been of a vicious and turbulent character. He associated himself with riotous and lawless companions, and there are statements in the contemporary historians, which represent him as permitting, if not encouraging, in the retainers of his court, the most violent and licentious courses. From this cloud, however, he speedily broke forth, and held his after-journey along a brighter path. He was an accomplished knight, skilful and intrepid in the tourney; and when, on one remarkable occasion, at a tilting-match in foreign parts, it was sought to effect his defeat by fraud and force combined, his dexterity and coolness gave him signal victory. A powerful opponent finding it in vain to assail him with the lance or the sword, seized him at unawares in a strenuous grasp, and sought thus to bring him to the ground. Edward, whose length of limb gave him immovable firmness in his seat, sat like a rock, and giving his horse the spur, forced his antagonist from the saddle, and easily shook him to the earth. He was little more than eighteen when he entered, under most difficult circumstances, on the practical part of government, nor was it possible to blend more of wisdom and dignity than was exhibited by him in a situation that might have made a veteran statesman doubtful of his course. When the 'mad parliament' had, by the provisions of Oxford, reduced the crown to a mere dependence on the aristocracy, the signature of the prince was insisted on as an essential particular of the contract between the king and the malcontent barons. Edward, young as he was, surrounded by dangers and left to his personal resources, hesitated long, and only yielded at last to the conviction that no alternative was left. Yet, when afterward he was urged to break through a compact imposed by force, and accepted from sheer necessity, and rendered null by the violence and bad faith of the other contracting party, he refused, although circumstances encouraged the attempt to avail himself of the occasion; nor did he draw the sword until events had rendered inevitable the appeal to arms. His military character was famed betimes. In his first battle, he missed the crisis of victory, by yielding to his impetuous courage; but, in the conduct of his second fight, he extorted the admiration of the most consummate commander of the age.

Some time before his father's death, Edward had, in the language of one of our annalists, 'undertaken the crusado;' and a sufficiently interesting romance might be manufactured out of the apocryphal details which have been blended with his real adventures. The truth may be stated in brief space. He landed with 1000 soldiers at St John d'Acre, augmented his army to 7000 men; repelled the Saracens who assailed him on his march, and made himself master of Nazareth. With a small band of active warriors, he succeeded in surprising a large assemblage of natives in the celebration of one of their great festivals. The rout was complete, and the plunder immense; but the unresisted slaughter was savage and degrading: non-combatants were not spared,—men, women, and children, were unrelentingly butchered. Finding all efforts against him in the field unavailing, the dagger of the assassin was employed, but the activity and strength of the prince saved him from death; and to this simple statement has been added an affecting but

altogether poetical incident: his wife, Eleanora of Castile, is said to have applied her mouth to the wound, and to have drawn forth the poison with which the weapon had been anointed. That the poniard was envenomed is probable; and it appears certain that gangrene—the effect either of the unguent or of the climate—ensued; but as truth and gallantry are not always in alliance, for the lady's lips we must read the surgeon's knife, and, though it be not so set down, perhaps the actual cautery, in those days of rough chirurgery, was frequently applied to wounds. A truce with the soldan left Edward at liberty to return home, but his progress through the intervening countries was rather a continual ovation than a journey; and though he received at Sicily the intelligence of his father's death, it was nearly two years after that announcement, ere he entered his capital in pomp and glory, amid the acclamations of his people.

The passionate and vindictive qualities of Edward's temper were not permitted to interfere with his general policy, however their violent outbreak in the hour of success might tarnish the counsels or the actions of which they were the sequence. His intellect was vigorous and forecasting, calculating all the probabilities, and providing against all casualties. His great political scheme, from the very outset, seems to have comprehended the complete subjugation of Great Britain; the reduction of the independent kingdoms of Scotland and Wales under his own sovereignty. And so much of power and subtlety did he employ, with such overpowering force and fierce determination did he make his inroad, that in one instance he succeeded, and in the other his exertions ceased only with his death: in both cases, whatever of success he might achieve, was in great part due to those internal dissensions and treacheries with which both countries were vexed, and which he maintained and promoted with most unscrupulous policy. While only prince, he had led an English army over the Severn; but now, when vested with regal power, he addressed himself to permanent conquest. The first campaign, aided by all the formalities of bell, book, and candle, and sanctioned by act of parliament, terminated in a hollow and transient truce. A second invasion, conducted on sound principles of strategy, placed the English army in the rear of Llewellyn's defences: that brave monarch fell in a reconnoissance, and the mountain-fastnesses of his people were stormed and destroyed. In a calmer period, and under a more liberal system, it awakens surprise and anger, that the valour of a patriotic king, dying in defence of his country, could not secure his remains from insult: his head, encircled with a mock diadem, was set upon a spike for the edification of the men of London.¹ The hurdle and the gallows were his brother's fate. Cambria was annexed to England, and placed under English institutions; nor was it the least felicitous of political devices, that assigned a Welsh fortress as the birthplace of an expected son, and invested the young Cambro-Briton with the title of the Prince of Wales. It would be unjust to the memory of Edward, stained as it is with savage and revengeful perpetrations, not to add, that the imputed massacre of the Welsh bards rests on no adequate authority.

Scotland was a higher prize, and its conquest a harder game. The

¹ Heming, I. 13.—Dunst. 475.

Cwmri, notwithstanding the excellence of their bards, were little better than savages; and their half-armed militia, without leaders, were hunted down and dissipated after the deaths of David and Llewelyn. But the men of the North met the Southron on equal terms. Less refined, probably, because less commercial, there was no inferiority in aught that related to the science of government and the custom of political association. The Scottish horse was inferior both in number and equipment to the baronial chivalry of the south; but, though overwhelmed by 'England's arrow-flight,' while the battle was at a distance, the heavier weapons of the northern infantry seem to have had the advantage when the fight was hand to hand. Want of mutual confidence and co-operation was the bane of Scotland in the hour of her depression; but there never lacked leaders, brave and skilful, even to her failing cause. Wallace, Douglas, Randolph, the Bruces, were among the most accomplished officers of their day, and they might have dictated their own terms as the price of their submission; yet, though danger and a bloody death on the scaffold or the field menaced the holy insurrection, they put all to hazard for the independence of their country, and, after a long and doubtful struggle, effected their noble purpose. Edward's first measures for the union of the two countries had been wise and honourable. He negotiated a marriage between his son and the heiress of Scotland, and the treaty had been concluded on terms satisfactory to both nations, when the whole scheme was rendered vain by the death of the princess. Edward, however, was not content to have his favourite object thus defeated, and he pressed steadily and unscrupulously forward to its attainment. The power of England was not only physically and economically greater than that of Scotland, but her strength was concentrated under the command of an able and politic monarch, while the energies of the latter were exhausted in domestic broils, and misapplied by dishonest counsels. At least a dozen claimants were clamouring for the crown, and in evil hour Edward was made the referee,—a measure which might have been the result of mere timidity, but which has marvellously the aspect of treacherous compact. It forms no part of our plan—assuredly it was none of Edward's—to settle the question of personal right, in the controversy of Bruce and Baliol; it is quite enough to observe, that when the sovereignty was awarded to the latter, the king of England exhibited a much more accurate knowledge of individual character, than disinterested regard for the well-being of the nation which had chosen him as umpire.² He availed himself of the occasion to set up the most extravagant claims, and a large concession of feudal rights gave him a solemn investiture as seezerain of Caledonia.³ The parchment king took the oath of fealty, and kept it so long as there was no temptation to break it: but in 1295, an opportunity offering of alliance with France, he listened to bolder counsels, and forwarded to England a formal renunciation of his fealty. Edward received the document with stern contempt. "Does the senseless traitor play the fool after this fashion? If he come not to us, we will go to him." His general, the earl Warenne, gained the decisive battle of Dunbar; Baliol surrendered, and military possession was taken of

² Heming, I. 30.

³ Rym. II. 542—590.

the northern kingdom. In the meantime, the war with France was ill conducted by the English leaders, and Edward himself landed in Flanders, but the farther prosecution of hostilities was terminated by a truce, and the Scots were left to their own resources. This state of things would, probably, have remained for some time undisturbed, but for the rigour and rapacity of the men to whom the management of the king's affairs in Scotland had been committed. It was attempted to oppress as a conquered nation, a brave and high-spirited people, and that selfish and dastardly policy met with its just reward. A man—one of that class which never finds a congenial field of action, but in the agony of nations—stood boldly forward in vindication of his injured country. Opposed or imperfectly aided by a jealous nobility, William Wallace was constrained to rely on his own exertions, and on such help as might be obtained by his own popularity and by the sanctity of his cause. Strong both in mental and bodily frame, he was equal to all emergencies; and if his actions were not always under the direction of a mild and regulated morality,—if he were sometimes sanguinary and vindictive,—his excuse, so far as it may be permitted to extenuate, is to be found in the circumstances of his country and the temper of his times. His exploits, on a smaller scale, were romantic and almost uniformly successful; by his skilful dispositions, and the strange infatuation of the enemy, he gained a great victory at Stirling; and when irretrievably defeated at Falkirk, it was from no defect in his plans or dispositions,—they were perfect, but treachery betrayed his movements and crippled his manœuvres. Yet, though Edward in person commanded against him, not even the presence and personal exertions of that great master in the art of war, could prevent him from effecting a soldierly retreat. This was in 1298; seven years afterward, Wallace, who had never ceased to harass the enemies of his nation, was betrayed to his pursuers. His death was by the hangman's hand, with all the bloody circumstance of a traitor's condemnation; and the treachery of the false friend who guided his captors, with the mean and barbarous revenge which doomed the patriot to a felon's fate, have consigned to infamy the names of Monteith and King Edward.* Still Scotland, though crushed, was not subdued; the unconquerable spirit of freedom kept alive a dubious and exhausting conflict; and the remainder of Edward's reign was wasted in the ineffectual struggle. A greater than Wallace took the field, and the royal Bruce commenced that series of bold and well-conducted efforts which gave, in the event, independence to his country, and a crown to himself. The treachery of Comyn,—its home charge upon the traitor by Bruce,—the fierce and insulting denial,—Bruce's hasty dagger,—and the 'Mak sicker' of Kirkpatrick, were the turning point of a course of history scarcely rivalled in romantic interest and glorious achievement.

This exhibition of the character of Edward's principal antagonists was necessary for the thorough illustration of his own. Those remarkable individuals tasked the utmost efforts of his power, and but for their opposition it is impossible to guess how widely his ambition might have ranged; he was not, however, a man to dissipate his strength by multiplying his objects, and he addressed himself with intense and undivided

* West. 451.—Stow, 409.—Fordun, Boece, Buchanan, Blind Harry, *passim*.

purpose to the conquest of Scotland. All the 'pomp, pride, and circumstance' of chivalry were displayed in the preparations, and at length he poured on the Scottish frontier the full tide of war. No effective opposition could be anticipated, since the small army of Bruce had been ruined by the fatal result of an attempted *camisade* at Perth. But a mightier hand arrested the invader on his path. His health had long been failing, and on the 6th of July 1307, in the 69th year of his age, and the 35th of his reign,⁵ he died at Burgh on the Sands, "in sight," says Lord Hailes, "of that country which he had devoted to destruction."

Edward's reign was, notwithstanding the pecuniary exactions consequent on an almost unceasing state of war, on the whole, beneficial to England. His fiscal necessities constrained him to important political concessions; reluctantly, however, and with an ill grace, did he make them, nor were they confirmed until after the persevering employment of every possible method of evasion. In truth, his character admitted the smallest possible portion of the magnanimous. Without fear, and without weakness, he was also destitute of those relentings of our common nature, without which resolution becomes obstinacy, and justice degenerates into brutal revenge. He has been called, by a strange confusion of cause and effect, the English Justinian, and it is admitted that during his reign great improvements were made in both the system and the administration of law. The ecclesiastical courts were shorn of their injurious privileges, and abridged of their usurpations; the secular tribunals were reformed, and their distinct jurisdiction ascertained by specific definition. The courts of assize were regulated; the police of the realm was made more efficient; justices of the peace were made permanent; entails were secured; the practice of sub-infeudation was done away; the abuses of mortmain were restrained. Yet of all these salutary enactments, but a slender proportion is due to the sagacity or patriotism of the monarch. They were the work of parliament, with the king they were considered as mere ways and means. Edward was the huckster of reform, and rated his concessions to his people at the value of gold: he had a tariff of constitutional amendments, and each of them was duly and securely taxed. He haggled with his parliament, tried all methods of raising his price, and tasked his ingenuity to get the highest charge for the smallest possible abatement of prerogative.

With all his faults, however, Edward was a splendid prince. If he were not like the Alfreds and the Charlemagnes, an outrunner of his age, he was at least one of its brightest ornaments. He had no taste for the mere trappings of royalty,—his crown was worn on his coronation day, and then laid aside,—his dress was simple, and his habits of life temperate. His munificence was kingly, and he was steady in his attachments. His domestic conduct was exemplary: son, husband, father—in all these relations he was worthy of the highest admiration. He persecuted the Jews, it is true, but in that day it was esteemed a virtue to heap insults and exactions on that doomed race; yet Edward was no bigot, and the expulsion from a commercial country, of an entire caste of active merchants and extensive capitalists, was a measure of which the impolicy did not altogether escape the shrewd and observant even of that ill-informed period.

⁵ Rym. ii. 1059.

Edward II.

BORN A. D. 1284.—DIED A. D. 1327.

IF the brilliant reign of the first Edward have tempted us somewhat beyond our assigned limits, we may conveniently allow ourselves to trim the balance by a more cursory review of the inglorious rule of his degenerate son. His was the reign of favourites; to them and to his caprice he sacrificed his tranquillity, his kingdom, and his life. As heir-apparent he had, by his excesses, repeatedly provoked the reprehension of his father. His companion, from a very early age, had been Piers de Gaveston, the son of a knight of Gascony, and with this youth he ran a wild and profligate course, until the king, shortly before his death, banished the injurious associate, under oath from his son never to recall him.¹ The oath was kept so long as violation was impossible, but its obligation was forgotten or rejected when he assumed the crown. Gaveston returned, and with him came revelry, splendour, waste, poverty, exaction, remonstrance and rebellion. Few kings have ascended the throne under circumstances more promising. Prepossessing in exterior, vigorous and active in frame, and, it should seem, with enough of intellectual quickness to have carried him through the easy task of royal representation with dignity and grace, the waywardness of his temper, and the perverse obstinacy of his self-will, neutralized all these advantages, involved him in perpetual storms, and at last left him hopelessly stranded. Never was any human being so utterly reckless of appearances and consequences in the childish determination to have his own way. In the indulgence of his capricious preferences he outraged the law, insulted his nobles, alienated his queen, and oppressed his people. His first step was prophetic: the recall of Gaveston gave true indication of his character, and he never either contradicted or retrieved the folly of that weak and unseasonable act. He lavished on his rapacious favourite, honours and treasure; dismissed or imprisoned his father's faithful ministers, and suspended the invasion of Scotland for which a formidable and expensive armament had been prepared. Nor did Gaveston bear his faculties meekly. At the coronation he assumed the place of honour and precedence; shamed wealth and nobility in his dress and personal attendance; contemned the petition of the barons for his immediate exile; and having, by his address in the tournament, unhorsed several noblemen of the highest rank, in his pride and petulance laughed them to scorn. His enemies, however, were too powerful, and his banishment was decreed; yet even this overwhelming opposition did the infatuated Edward strive to evade by appointing him to the viceroyalty of Ireland.

Edward's accession was in 1307; early in the following year he married Isabel of France, one of the loveliest women of her time; and the exercise of a slender portion of common sense and rectitude of principle might have made him happy and respected. All, however, was in vain; his pride and petulance were not to be controlled, and every thing was put to the risk for that one wretched bauble on which he had set his

¹ Rym. ii. 1043.

heart. Partly by cajolery, partly by violence, Gaveston, after a brief absence, was brought back, but neither had learned wisdom:—the miserable game of haughtiness and outrage, concession and resumption was played over again, until affairs became desperate. The barons armed, and, after appointing a council of peers, under the name of Ordainers, for the redress of grievances, Gaveston concealed himself, re-appeared, was forced into banishment, returned, until at length exasperation reached its height,—war was levied against the king and his minion, and the latter perished in the strife. He appears to have been by no means destitute of eminent qualities, and a discreet conduct and courteous demeanour might have enabled him to maintain his position; but he was vain and unprincipled, it was impossible to trust him, and he fell the victim of his own incurable folly. Edward was outrageous in his grief and anger; he resisted strenuously the demands for an amnesty; but the barons were in arms, and he was compelled to yield. Gaveston was beheaded in June 1312; in October, pardons general and particular, were issued under the sign-manual.

In the meantime Bruce had been availing himself to the utmost of the opportunities given him by these injurious dissensions. By a series of gallant and well-managed enterprises, he gained possession of the principal fortresses of his kingdom, and pressed so closely the siege of Stirling, that the governor agreed to surrender if not relieved before the feast of John the Baptist. On the eve of that festival the army of Edward appeared in sight, and, on the 24th of June 1314, was fought the decisive battle of Bannockburn, an illustrious instance of the superiority of intellect over force. The advantage of numbers was greatly on the side of Edward; but the Scots were under the direction of the ablest officers of the age. Bruce commanded, and he was seconded by Randolph and Douglas. Nothing could be finer than the position and arrangement of the Scottish army, and throughout the battle not an error seems to have been committed: the defensive system was maintained until its utmost effect had been produced,—the stratagems of war were skillfully and seasonably employed,—and at the critical moment a bold offensive movement completed the success. On the other side nothing could be more miserably handled than the English army on that day: there was no presiding genius,—the subordinate commanders were rash, and the attack was made without support or simultaneousness,—no provision had been made for retreat, and all was dispersion and utter rout. Edward displayed courage in the fight, but his escape was difficult, and tried to the utmost the speed of his horse. The gain of this great battle encouraged the Scots to make strenuous efforts for the conquest of Ireland, but they were unsuccessful, and the death in battle near Dundalk, in October 1318, of the gallant Edward Bruce, left the English in undisputed possession.

During three years after the battle of Bannockburn, famine and pestilence afflicted England, and that unhappy country seemed to be given up to an accumulation of miseries. The king and his most powerful nobles were at variance; desire of revenge filled his breast, and distrust of his intentions prompted their movements, while the Scots, taking advantage of these dissensions, pushed their inroads to the Humber and the Tyne; they took Berwick, and an attempt by Edward to retake it failed. In the meantime the king, untaught by experience, was renew-

ing his former fault, and attaching himself to a new favourite, who, in his turn, renewed the errors of Gaveston, and distinguished himself by his haughtiness and rapacity. Hugh le Despenser—anglicised to Spenser—was the name of the individual who now became, *ex officio*, an object of hatred to the barons. They rose in arms, proscribed the Spensers, father and son, insulted the queen, and opened a correspondence with the Scots. This time Edward was successful, and he gratified his revengeful disposition by the execution of his most obnoxious adversaries.

This victory over domestic insurrection was followed by a truce with Scotland, and it might have been hoped that an interval of quiet might have allowed the country a breathing-space from its disasters. But Edward was the lord of misrule, and his administration was doomed to misfortune. The king of France invaded Guienne; conspiracies were frequent and alarming; and the escape of Lord Mortimer from the tower of London set loose the most formidable of the conspirators. Calamity was now hastening on, and the credulity of Edward lent it speed. He suffered himself to be deluded into a fatal snare, devised, it is probable, by Mortimer, who had found an asylum with the king of France, Charles IV., brother of Edward's queen. It was the first object of this subtle man to obtain possession of the prince-royal, and for that purpose he intrigued successfully. Isabel left England for her brother's court, where she became the mistress of Mortimer, and they, soon after, on a specious pretence, persuaded Edward to send over the young prince. Measures were now taken for an invasion of England, and, in September 1326, Mortimer and the queen landed in Suffolk with an armed force. The king was friendless; his capital rejected him, and he fled to Wales. His enemies pursued him without respite: the elder Spenser surrendered at Bristol, and died the bloody death assigned to traitors; his son soon after underwent the same fate. The tragedy was now hastening to its conclusion: the crown was declared forfeited, and Edward of Carnarvon was nominally succeeded by Edward of Windsor, while the real power was exercised by Mortimer and Isabel.² But one step more remained, and this strange complication of folly, fraud, and violence was completed in September 1327, by the murder of the king. His character has been already sufficiently illustrated, and we need not swell our pages by further exposition. There is, however, one event which occurred in his reign, which, though but slightly connected with his personal character, it were improper to pass without mentioning:—The order of the Knights Templars, established in 1118, originally poor, had become powerful and immensely rich. Their wealth was, probably, their crime; the pope and the king of France, Philip the Fair, seized upon their persons and dissolved the order: they were persecuted unrelentingly, and many of them suffered a cruel death. In England they were more leniently treated; they were not injured in person, but their property was transferred to the Knight-Hospitalers.³

² Fed. i. 650.

³ Stat. at large, x. App. 23.

Thomas, Earl of Lancaster.

DIED A. D. 1322.

AMONG Edward's English nobles, the most powerful was Thomas, the grandson of Henry III., who united in his single person the five earldoms of Lancaster, Lincoln, Leicester, Salisbury, and Derby. He was the eldest son of Edmond, surnamed Crouchback, the favourite son of Henry III. Edward had received from his father a large portion of the forfeited estates of the rebellious barons, and many other magnificent donations: he had also obtained valuable grants from his brother, Edward I., and his mother, Eleanor. Two successive marriages, first with Aveline, sole heiress of the earl of Albemarle, who, dying without issue, bequeathed to him the whole of her vast possessions, and next with Blanche of Artois, daughter of Henry Lacy, earl of Lincoln, had vastly augmented Edmond's already extensive possessions, and this accumulation of wealth and power was turned against the crown by his descendants. The confederate barons, while concerting measures for the overthrow of the hated Gaveston, placed themselves under the leadership of Thomas Plantagenet, Edmond's eldest son, now the first prince of the blood, and by far the most potent nobleman in the kingdom. He headed the armed barons who presented themselves in the parliament at Westminster, and extorted from their intimidated sovereign an order for the immediate banishment of the man whom he most delighted to honour. Upon Gaveston's return to England, he raised and led on the army, which, for a time, set the royal power at defiance, and wielded the destinies of the kingdom; and when that unfortunate minion was doomed to expiate his manifold offences against the haughty nobility of England on the scaffold, the spot selected for his execution was fixed within the jurisdiction of the earl of Lancaster, who alone, of all the conspirators, dared to brave the highest resentment and indignation of his sovereign.¹ In the negotiations which followed betwixt the king and his nobles, the earl of Lancaster still acted the most conspicuous and important part; and when a pacification was at last concluded betwixt the two parties, the approbation of Lancaster and his chief associates, who were absent at the time, was specially stipulated for by the rest.

In 1316, when, yielding to the necessities of his situation, Edward consented to the execution of the 'ordinances,' as they were called, and submitted to the other conditions imposed upon him by the predominating faction, the earl of Lancaster was appointed chief of the council, as well as commander-in-chief of the expedition then preparing against Scotland. On this occasion, the earl accepted the presidency on three conditions:—That he should be allowed to resign if the king refused to follow his advice;—that nothing of consequence should be done till he had been consulted;—and that unprofitable counsellors should be removed, from time to time, by authority of parliament. These terms were entered at his demand on the rolls.² These stipulations were wise and prudent; but the influence of the royalists,

¹ Walsing. 101.—T. de la More, 593.

² Rot. Parl. i. 352.

notwithstanding, prevailed to such an extent, that Lancaster hesitated to attend the rendezvous at Newcastle previous to the inroad upon Scotland, and absented himself likewise from two successive meetings of parliament. In justification of this conduct, he alleged his knowledge of a clandestine correspondence betwixt Edward and the Scottish monarch, and of designs having been formed against his own life by his enemies at court. Whatever truth there might be in either of these allegations, it is certain that the popular party hung together by ties of so slender a nature, that a breath of suspicion might dissolve them. There were always men found willing to link their own fortune to that of their sovereign; and if the influence of Lancaster had been even more predominating than it was, there existed a source of dissension in his own family, which must have gone far to weaken his hands in so turbulent a period. His countess, Alice, only child of Henry, earl of Lincoln, who had brought her husband an immense accession of property, being the greatest heiress in the kingdom, appears to have lived unhappily with him, and finally to have withdrawn from his house and bed, and placed herself under the protection of John de Warenne, earl of Surrey. The insulted husband instantly appealed to arms, and had made himself master of several of Surrey's castles, and likewise of some belonging to the king, when, by the interference of the pope's legates and the earl of Pembroke, both parties were prevailed upon to suspend hostilities, and appeal their differences to a parliament to be held at Lincoln. In this appeal, the influence of Lancaster prevailed, and the ordinances were again confirmed.

The rise of the Despensers, under the favour shown them by the king, was the next matter which supplied 'the turbulent Lancaster' with a pretext for taking up arms against his sovereign. Success again attended his rebellious proceedings; and on the same rolls, in which the order of banishment against the Spensers, father and son, was recorded, a general pardon was also entered to the earl and his associates for all treasons, murders, or felonies, committed by them up to that day.³ Lancaster's domination, however, was now drawing to a close. Impatient of the yoke which his haughty cousin had contrived to fix upon him, Edward had recourse to arms; and being joined by a number of the barons, formerly confederates with Lancaster, but who now began to perceive the secret ambition which prompted his opposition to the king, compelled Lancaster and the earl of Hereford, who made common cause with him, to retire into Yorkshire. Lancaster had long been suspected of secretly negotiating with the Scots; he now entered into a formal alliance with the king of Scotland, and, emboldened by his promise of aid, advanced with his army to oppose the passage of the royalists over the Trent at Burton; but his plan of operations failing, he retreated northwards, pursued by the royal forces who came up with him at Boroughbridge, where his passage of the river was likewise disputed by Sir Andrew Harcla. Repulsed in the attempt to force his way, and discouraged by the fall of his associate Hereford, who was slain in endeavouring to force the bridge, Lancaster returned into the town of Boroughbridge, probably in the hope that the promised reinforcement from Scotland might arrive during the night,

³ Rot. Parl. i 364.

But in this hope he was disappointed, and on receiving a summons to surrender next morning he retired into the chapel, and having recommended himself to the mercy of heaven, resigned himself to his captors, who conducted him to York. Here he was summarily arraigned before the king, six earls, and the royal barons, and was condemned to be drawn, hanged, and quartered as a traitor. The king was pleased to commute this ignominious punishment for that of decapitation, but his courtiers took care to signalise their own loyalty by heaping insults on the person of the traitor. On the 22d of March, 1322, being seven days after the battle of Boroughbridge, this once potent earl was led forth to execution from his own castle of Pontefract, on a lean jade without a bridle, to an eminence in the neighbourhood. The spectators pelted him with mud as he moved along, and taunted him with the title of King Arthur, the name which he had assumed in his correspondence with the Scots; but he bore their insults with calmness and dignity. "King of heaven," he cried, "grant me mercy, for the king of earth hath forsaken me!" On reaching the spot which had been fixed on for his execution, he knelt down at first with his face towards the east, but the malignity of his enemies was yet unsoftened, and as a last insult they ordered him to turn towards the north, that he might look upon his friends. He obeyed, and while in that posture his head was struck off by an executioner from London.⁴ His associates, Badlesmere, Giffard, Barret, Cheyney, Fleming, and several others were afterwards formally tried and executed; and Harcla received for his services the forfeited earldom of Carlisle,—a boon which he was destined soon to forfeit in his turn for treasonable correspondence with the Scots. Lancaster's immense possessions being forfeited to the crown, were extensively employed in gratifying the rapacity of the Despensers; but the fortunes of the house of Lancaster did not long remain under a cloud. Thomas had died childless, but Henry, the second son of Edward Crouchback, contrived so to ingratiate himself with Edward's son and successor, that in the first parliament of that monarch, he obtained an act for the reversal of his brother's attainder, whereby he became repossessed of the confiscated family estates.

Hugh Spenser.

DIED A. D. 1326.

THE king's chief favourite after the death of Gaveston was Hugh Le Despenser, or Spenser, a young gentleman of English birth, of high rank, and ample fortune. His father, a baron descended from the Conqueror's steward, had been in high trust under Edward I., and he himself held the office of chamberlain of the royal household. His handsome person and agreeable manners won for him the favour of his sovereign; while his marriage with a daughter of the late earl of Gloucester slain at Bannockburn, gave him possession of the greater portion of the county of Glamorgan. But these advantages rendered him so much the more an object of aversion and envy to the less favoured and less

⁴ Rym. iii. 999.

potent nobility. Walsingham indeed represents him as drawing upon himself the hatred of the other courtiers, and of the Lancastrian party, by his arrogant and oppressive behaviour,¹ but there is no proof of this, and it seems probable that the head and front of his offending lay in his avowed attachment to the royal person, and the consequent gratitude of his sovereign.

In 1321, John de Mowbray having taken possession, without previously obtaining livery and seisin from the crown, of an estate belonging to his wife's father, the younger Spenser advised his royal master to claim the fief as escheated to the crown, and subsequently to confer it upon himself. This transaction excited the indignation of the lords of the marches, who immediately began to devastate the possessions of the favourite and destroy his castles. In these proceedings they were countenanced by the earls of Lancaster and Hereford, who also supported an act of accusation against the Spensers, consisting of eleven counts; it charged them with usurping the royal power, and alienating the king's affections from his faithful nobility, also generally with advising unconstitutional measures and extorting fines from all who solicited grants from the crown. The act concluded with these words: "Therefore we, the peers of the land, earls and barons, in the presence of our lord the king, do award that Hugh Le Despenser, the son, and Hugh Le Despenser, the father, be disinherited for ever, and banished from the kingdom of England, never to return, unless it be by the assent of the king, and by assent of the prelates, earls, and barons, in parliament duly summoned: and that they quit the realm by the port of Dover before the next feast of St John the Baptist: and that if they be found in England after that day, or ever return, they be dealt with as enemies of the king and kingdom." The king endeavoured to shield his favourite from the punishment demanded; he urged that the elder Spenser was beyond the sea on his service, that the younger was with his fleet guarding the Cinque Ports, and that it was unjust to condemn men before they had had an opportunity of answering the counts laid to their charge; the prelates also protested in writing against the sentence; but the plan of intimidation resorted to by Lancaster prevailed, and the royal assent to the banishment of the two Spensers was wrung from the unwilling monarch.

On the decline of Lancaster's popularity, and the consequent infusion of new hopes and fresh vigour into the royal cause, the two Spensers successively returned to England and obtained the repeal of the award enacted against them. The father was also created earl of Winchester, and was amply compensated for his losses by the gift of several of the forfeited estates on the fall of his arch-enemy the earl of Lancaster.² But both failed to profit by their recent lesson of adversity, and by a series of impolitic measures soon drew down upon themselves a heavier vengeance than that which they had so lately experienced. To the queen they became objects of the most decided aversion; and on her return from France, her proclamation was especially levelled against them as the principal source of the calamities which had befallen the nation under her husband's government. Bishop Orleton availing himself of the queen's known resentment towards the Spensers,

¹ P. 113.

² Brady 140—146.—Stat. x.

on being commanded to preach before her as she passed through Oxford in pursuit of her fugitive husband, selected for his text that passage in Genesis :—" I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. She shall bruise thy head." These words he applied to Isabella and the Spensers.

On the surrender of Bristol by the burghers, the elder Spenser, to whom the town had been intrusted by Edward, was accused before Sir William Trussel, of having usurped the royal prerogatives, and done what in him lay to widen the breach between his sovereign and the people. After a mock trial, he was hurried to the place of execution, where he was embowelled alive; his body was afterwards hung on a gibbet for four days, and then cut into pieces and thrown to the dogs.³

The execution of the old man, now in his ninetieth year, took place within sight of the king and of his own son, who had hastily put to sea with the intention of retiring into the small island of Lundy in the Bristol channel, which had been previously fortified and stored with provisions. But after beating about for several days in the estuary of the Severn, contending with a strong westerly wind, the fugitives were compelled to re-land near Swansea, and endeavoured to elude the vigilance of their enemies by concealing themselves in different places between the monastery of Neath and the castle of Caerfilly. Here their retreat was soon discovered by Henry, earl of Leicester, who, having corrupted the fidelity of the natives, got possession of the younger Spenser, and Robert Baldoch, the king's chancellor, who had secreted themselves in the woods near the castle of Lantressan. Edward, on hearing of their apprehension, instantly surrendered himself to his cousin. Baldoch, being a priest, escaped immediate execution, but sank under the rigours of his imprisonment. A severer fate awaited Spenser. He was arraigned at Hereford before the same judge who had pronounced sentence against his father. The charges preferred against him were his returning to the kingdom after having been banished in parliament; his having caused the earl of Lancaster to be put to death at Pomfret castle; his having favoured the king of Scots, and by his treachery occasioned the defeat of Bannockburn; and finally, his having excited misunderstandings between the king and queen, and by bribes procured her being sent out of France. Most of these accusations were totally unfounded, and some of them even inconsistent with each other. But they sufficed for the purpose of his enemies, and sentence of death being recorded against him, he was immediately drawn in a black gown, with the arms of his family reversed, and a wreath of nettles on his head, to the place of execution, where he was hanged on a gallows fifty feet high. His head was afterwards sent as an agreeable present to the citizens of London, who decorated one of their bridges with it.

³ Apolog. Ad. Orlet. 2765.—Leland's Collectanea, i. 673.

Edward III.

BORN A. D. 1312.—DIED A. D. 1377.

IF any thing could surprise a mind conversant with the waywardness of human nature, the utmost astonishment would be excited by the behaviour of the men who, during the former reign, and the earlier periods of the present, exercised an uncontrolled authority in the government of England. Gaveston fell a victim to the consequences of his own insolence; Spenser, untaught by the fearful lesson, was equally domineering, and perished by a yet severer fate; and, at the time now under consideration, Mortimer was wielding the sovereign power in a yet loftier spirit of despotic arrogance. The murder of the deposed king was followed by the treacherous circumvention, and the assassination under form of law, of his brother the duke of Kent. The popular indignation awakened by these atrocities, was repelled with a high hand, and the entire administration of the kingdom was usurped by the queen and her paramour. Mortimer, now created earl of March, became 'proud beyond measure,' indulged the magnificence of his taste in tournaments and splendid feasts, held the rein of empire with a tight and galling hand, and provoked his own son to give him the title of 'king of folly.' But all this extravagance was soon to cease: a master-spirit was now to become lord of the ascendant: Edward, intrepid and jealous of his right, was now eighteen, and in mental energy much beyond his years. Ill-disposed to yield a longer submission to an intrusive power, he confided his feelings to Lord Montacute, afterward created earl of Salisbury, and a plan for his emancipation was promptly devised. The parliament of 1334 was appointed to be held at Nottingham, and the usurper took up his quarters, with the queen, at the castle, which was strongly guarded. Admission in the usual way was rendered impracticable by the precautions used, but the aid of the governor, and the indication of a subterraneous passage, gave an easy entrance to the conspirators. The queen, rushing from her chamber, called in vain upon her 'fair son' to 'spare the gentil Mortimer;' he was seized, summarily condemned by his peers,¹ and ignominiously executed at Tyburn.

The age was warlike, and the genius of Edward well-suited to the character of the age. There were, close at hand, two antagonists who might have stirred the blood of a tamer monarch by their attitude either of resistance or defiance, and he accepted the challenge real or implied. France, however, was for the present put aside, and the feud with Scotland obtained his first attention. That country was again distracted by the weak and criminal dissensions of her nobles; and, though brave and able chiefs were not wanting to her cause, yet the master-minds had disappeared. Bruce was dead, and his son was a minor; Randolph did not long survive his friend, and James Douglas had fallen the victim of his romantic valour on his way to the Holy Land with the heart of Robert Bruce. Perhaps there is not to be found in history an instance of three such men giving themselves up so en-

¹ Rot. Parl. ii. 52, &c.

tirely and so unitedly to the maintenance of the same cause; and it could not be but that their country would severely feel their loss, aggravated as it was by the evils of a long minority. Edward's first lesson in the practice of war had been given him in 1327, when Randolph and Douglas invaded Northumberland, and were suffered to retreat without fighting, through a strange want of skill or enterprize in the English leaders. But six years afterward he had thrown off his trammels, and was in the uncontrolled command of his own army when he gave battle to the Scots at Halidon-hill, and defeated them with tremendous loss.² France had the next turn: Edward quartered with his own the arms of the French king, and addressed himself in earnest to the conquest of that powerful kingdom. He made a league with Artaveldt, the bold brewer of Ghent, at that time the leader of the Flemings, and made his first attempt from the Flemish frontier. "We passed out," is his own language in a letter to his son, "of Valenciennes, and the same day began to burn in Cambresin, and burnt there all the following week; so that this country is very completely destroyed, as well in its corn as in cattle and other property." But in this reckless and unprofitable devastation all his preparations terminated, for Philip declined a battle, and Edward was compelled to retreat and to dismiss the greater part of his army. His next campaign commenced with a great naval victory. Philip, whether intending to interrupt the English fleet, or, as seems more probable, to make a demonstration of invading England during the absence of the king and the army, had prepared a mighty armament at Sluys: and on receiving intelligence of the fact, the English monarch, though with far inferior force, and in opposition to the intreaties of his council, set sail in quest of them, and, notwithstanding their numbers and strong position, led on to the attack. The fight was desperate and the victory complete. Edward's archers cleared the decks; the boarders rushed over every obstacle, and nearly the whole fleet remained in the possession of the assailants. The campaign on land, however, like the former, effected nothing against the defensive system of Philip, and a negotiation was commenced for the cessation of hostilities. In the meantime, circumstances were occurring elsewhere, which offered the means of access to the very heart of France, through one of her most vulnerable points. John duke of Brittany died, and, in the disputes which followed respecting the succession, Philip aided his nephew, Charles de Blois, while Edward eagerly took up the quarrel of the count de Montfort, who was himself in captivity, but whose right was resolutely defended by his wife, Jane. Besieged and hard-pressed in the fortress of Hennebion, she was relieved by that pride of chivalry, Sir Walter Manny, and Edward prepared for the invasion of France, on a plan more decidedly strategic than any which had been before attempted. His cousin, the gallant and accomplished earl of Derby, was sent to Guienne, where he obtained brilliant successes with a slender force. The king himself landed in Normandy, apparently with the double object of calling off from Gascony the formidable army which was now menacing the earl of Derby, and of traversing Picardy, joining a Flemish division in Artois, and laying siege to Calais. The first purpose was effected, but the second, through the

² Heming, 275.

unexplained failure of the Flemings, was only accomplished by the consummate generalship of Edward, and the unassisted energy of his gallant soldiers. From La Hogue, where he debarked, he marched forward, ravaging the country along the line of his progress, as far as Evreux, where he turned northward to Rouen. Here he found the bridge broken, and the whole line of the Seine rendered impracticable by the removal or destruction of all the means of passage, and by the presence of the king of France, with an overpowering force which he was still increasing by every possible exertion. After various ineffectual manœuvres, Edward succeeded, by a well-executed feint, in passing the Seine at Poissy, and he was followed close by his mortified antagonist. The Somme now lay between him and the termination of his march, and of that river every bridge was broken, and every ford strongly guarded. Across one of these shallows below Abbeville, he forced his way in the face of 12,000 men, and having secured a vantage-ground, turned upon his pursuers. It was on the field of Crecy that he formed his army and awaited the assault. In the arrangement of his small, but well-disciplined band, he seems to have displayed the perfection of military science; every arm was disposed for mutual support, and every local advantage turned to account. He dismounted a part of his cavalry; and here we may permit ourselves to retrace for a moment the history of one of the greatest modern improvements in the art of war.

In the days of antiquity, the Greeks had conquered the Asiatics by the superiority of infantry over cavalry; and the Romans had subdued the Greeks in the fatal battle of Pydna, who had pushed the system of the phalanx to an absurd extreme, by a judicious employment of light troops in aid of the heavy armed. The Roman infantry conquered the world, and gave, at Pharsalia, the strongest illustration of the inefficiency of horse against thoroughly trained foot. Time passed on, and the Roman discipline first degenerated and then disappeared. The iron chivalry of the middle ages trampled under foot the irregular and ill-armed militia, that crowded within a given space, stood no longer than they were under the protection of their horse. The true character and value of the footsoldier was entirely forgotten, and armies were counted formidable in proportion to the number of their cavalry. The archers of England seem to have made the earliest approach to an efficient infantry, yet they seem to have required great skill on the part of the commander, to avail himself to the utmost of their terrible discharge, without exposing them to be cut up by a cavalry charge. Their Scottish campaigns appear to have taught the English the value of a regular and compact infantry. At the battle of Falkirk, Wallace adopted an admirable formation; masses of spearmen connected by lines of bowmen and supported by horse, and it is by no means improbable that he might have been at least able to hold his ground, but for the treachery of the Scottish chieftains, who rode off without striking a blow, leaving the Ettrick foresters to be sabred by the English knights, and the close columns to be overwhelmed by the missiles of the southern archers. At Bannockburn Bruce improved upon the plan of Wallace: he dismounted the larger portion of his cavalry, preserving at the same time greater mobility in his formation. At Halidon-Hill we find Edward apparently adopting the same principles; he awaited the assault himself on foot, and when the attack had been repelled, urged on a vigor-

ous pursuit. And in the present instance we find him acting on the same system with all such improvements as his own genius and experience might suggest. The archers were so posted as to give the utmost effect to their destructive aim, and at the same time to afford them the support of the heavy-armed foot; while the king kept the third line tight in hand, as a reserve in case of calamity.

It was on the 26th of August 1346, late in the day, that the French appeared in front of the English position. An eclipse of the sun intervened, and a fierce storm of thunder and lightning passed over the field; but at 5 o'clock in the evening all was clear, and the battle joined. It was fierce but brief; the French fought with impetuous courage, but without concert or combination; numbers failed before science, and a victory, splendid and decisive, rewarded the skill and discipline of Edward and his followers. His son, the Black Prince, fought in this his first battle, and nobly won his spurs. The triumph of Crecy saved Guienne, while John, duke of Normandy and heir of France, had led a hundred thousand men against the earl of Derby, who very wisely retired before the storm, and waited in Bourdeaux the issue of events. During more than three months was the French prince detained before the fortress of Aiguillon; in vain did his immense army, in four divisions, relieving each other every three hours, keep up the assault through six consecutive days; in vain were towers erected, and an unceasing shower of stones poured upon the place from every military engine then in use; vain were all the stratagems of war,—Walter Manny was in the fortress, and neither he nor his intrepid companions were men to yield while a wall was left them to defend. John swore never to raise the siege until the place was in his power; but necessity is greater than an oath, and his highness had to digest his perjury as he might, since he failed to take the place. He was compelled to reinforce his father, and Lord Derby rushed like a destroying torrent over Saintonge and Poitou, finishing his victorious course by the storm and sack of the wealthy and well-peopled city of Poitiers. In the meantime Edward laid siege to Calais, while Philip collected his troops for the purpose of raising the blockade. The English camp was unapproachable but by fortified defiles which intimidated the French generals, and the king sent Edward a challenge braving him to a ranged battle; the invitation was accepted and the guest presented himself at the appointed time and place, but Philip failed in courtesy and declined the meeting. The town yielded at discretion, and if we do not here recite the hundred times told romance of the surrender of Calais, and of the half-dozen heroes with halts round their necks, it is for the simple reason, that we doubt it altogether. Old Froissart, that immortal chronicler, is, we suspect, a better painter than historian; and we refuse, on his sole credit, to charge Edward with an act of ferocity when he appears to be innocent. That he was exceedingly irritated against the townsmen, who had grown rich by privateering and piracy at the expense of his people, we can readily suppose; and that he might assume a stern countenance and insist upon a humiliating submission, is also probable; but that he ever intended to put the delegates to death is clearly false. It was common in those days to require such an act of degradation, with the understanding that nothing more severe was intended; and the old romancer himself mentions that when Edward rejected their appeal of

mercy, he winked aside upon his attendants, evidently as a signal for their interference. The English monarch was by no means remarkable for tender-heartedness, but it is not to be forgotten that he suffered, at an early period of the siege, nearly two thousand of the inhabitants to leave the town, giving each of them an ample meal and a liberal largess: and, if his humanity stopped there,—if, at a more advanced period of the blockade he refused to give passage to a second emigration, and sternly saw five hundred individuals perish between his camp and the walls,—it may also be remembered that, politically and militarily speaking, the attempt to pass them forward was an encroachment on his former concession; the people had been detained so long as they could be of use, and it was an imprudent attempt to dismiss as non-combatants, persons who had become an incumbrance. Such, however, is war, systematically ferocious, and if, in the present instance, we cannot wholly acquit the king of England, the guilt must be at least shared by the governor of Calais. The fall of this fortress was followed by a truce between the contending monarchs, which was irregularly kept for several years.

Edward, not content with his successes as a general, seems to have had a strange love of fighting for its own sake. A treacherous attempt to seize Calais, notwithstanding the armistice, was defeated by a counter-plot; and a select band, of which the king was one, under Sir Walter Manny, encountered the body of French troops which was waiting for the opening of the gates. Edward engaged hand to hand Eustace de Ribeaumont, a gallant knight, by whom he was twice beaten on his knees, but whom he ultimately compelled to surrender. The French party became prisoners and were admitted to ransom, but de Ribeaumont, crowned by his conqueror with a chaplet of pearls, was dismissed freely and with generous praise.³ On another occasion did this warrior-king gratuitously expose himself to extreme danger. The mercantile navigators of Biscay were little better than a set of pirates, and lost no opportunity of doing an ill turn to their great rivals, the mariners of England. Aware that this conduct was likely to be sharply visited by a monarch like Edward, the Biscayans, who traded extensively with Flanders, collected and armed their ships, committing many acts of piracy as they sailed up the channel. Expostulation was answered by insult, redress refused, and aware that reprisals were probably at hand, La Cerda, the admiral of these older buccaneers, had strengthened his armament and increased the number of his fighting men. Not content with committing the business to his naval commanders, Edward resolved to command in person, and after a desperate action, in which both himself and his son were in extreme danger, defeated the enemy with severe loss. Victory is an animating thing, but in the end even the victor may find it dearly bought. In the recent conflicts much of England's best blood had been poured out freely but unprofitably. Taxation pressed hard upon the victorious people, and plague, travelling as it is wont from the pestilential East, traversed Europe, wasting as it passed. In London the cemeteries were gorged, and Sir Walter Manny purchased a field of thirteen acres, the present site of the Charter House, where, during several weeks, two hundred corpses *per diem* were deposited. So dire was the contagion that the very cattle died in the

³ Froissard, 140.

field and in the stall; labour became costly to a mischievous extent; and though the landlord waived his claim for rent, the food of man was at a price that severely enhanced the sufferings of the poor whom the plague had spared.

War again—war with France, and for trifles light as air: for titles and homages, for parchments and genuflexions! The Black Prince, with sixty thousand men, plundered and devastated the south of France, from the Pyrenees to Thoulouse. Carcassone, not inferior to York in extent,—Narbonne, large as London,—were given to the flames. Edward himself advanced from Calais. The French system was defensive; they drained the country, and left the English to extract, as they could, sustenance from the waste. The Scots, at the instigation of their allies, invaded the English border; but Edward, returning from France, took such deep vengeance for the foray, that the ‘Burnt Candlemas’ was long remembered as a by-word and vindictive slogan. In 1356, the Prince of Wales renewed his inroad with a smaller army, varying the scene by ravaging in the direction of Auvergne and Berri. But he had advanced too far; his communications were cut off, and he knew nothing of the movements of his opponents, until his outposts fell in with the enemy near Poitiers, between him and his own frontier. Seven to one is the lowest odds assigned by the annalists of the time, and the prince listened not unwillingly to proposals of mediation from the cardinal de Perigord, nor was he niggardly in concession:—“My honour and the honour of my army excepted, I will consent to any sacrifice.” King John of France, however, confident in a superiority which seemed to make resistance madness, would accept nothing short of personal surrender, and the parties prepared for battle. Every precaution was taken on both sides, but the English commander omitted nothing that a consummate knowledge of the art of war could suggest: trenches and barricades added strength to a position already strong and inaccessible except by a road of which the hedges were lined with archers. On the 19th of September, the battle was fought. The French men-at-arms entered the defile, where they were suffered to advance until irretrievably engaged in its long and narrow windings: then began the rout,—the terrible archery of England poured its incessant storm,—the generals of the first division were killed or taken,—and the second line, assailed by the archers in front, and turned by a body of cavalry which suddenly appeared on its flank, gave way. Then the English prince gave the word, ‘In the name of God and St George, banners! advance.’ The fight now became terrible. John brought up his reserves, and made a noble effort to wrest victory from his conquerors. All was in vain: slaughter wrought her perfect work, and the gallant king of France remained in the hands of the English. Historians and bards have vied with each other in lauding the courtesies of the Black Prince to his enforced guest. On the field and in his father’s capital, that *gentil seigneur* honoured himself by honouring his prisoner.⁴ In truth, both father and son were a brilliant pair; mirrors of knighthood,—gentle in hall,—lions in fight; and their valour now had its ample reward in the exhibition of two sovereign princes, captives to England’s sword. Ten years and more had David, king of

⁴ Froissard, 164.

Scots, remained in England, since he was compelled to surrender at the battle of Neuill's Cross, and shortly after this he was released on ransom.

In 1360, the English king, with a brilliant army, attended for the first time by an extensive commissariat, advanced to the walls of Paris, but the season was adverse, and he retired with great loss, occasioned by one of the most tremendous tempests recorded in European history. In no long time after these events, peace was concluded, but the French derived little benefit from the cessation of arms. The 'companies,' as they were called, consisting of the soldiers of fortune who had been employed during the war, refused to disband, and setting military interference at defiance, maintained themselves by violence in the heart of France, until they were led by Bertrand du Guesclin into Spain, to the assistance of the bastard Don Enrique, Count Trastamara, against his half-brother, the legitimate Pedro, king of Castile. The latter craved the aid of the Black Prince. The battle of Najara, where Du Guesclin was beaten and made prisoner, replaced Pedro on his throne for a season; but the climate of Spain ruined the health of Edward, who lingered the remaining years of his life through a long and depressing malady.

In the meantime, Charles V. of France was steadily pursuing a cautious but effective system of policy, ostensibly pacific at first, but terminating in a war, not of battles, but of sieges and manœuvres,—exhausting the means of the English by constant pressure upon their resources, and allowing them no opportunity of retrieving their losses by a decisive blow. At length the Black Prince, notwithstanding his debility, took the field, and his antagonists retired. But his last act was a bloody deed,—a massacre of the helpless,—the women, children, and unwarlike burghers of Limoges, who had provoked him by what may have been treachery, but was probably mere cowardice, in delivering up their city to the king of France. After this, his standard was no more unfurled: he returned to England, and lingered during six years, condemning, but unable to restrain, the mal-administration of the kingdom, and seconding, to the utmost of his power, the efforts of the 'good parliament' to reform the government. His death, June 8, 1376, threw the power of the state into the hands of his brother, John of Gaunt (Ghent), duke of Lancaster, and the work of state-reformation was roughly checked. The king seems to have been, for some time past, lapsing into dotage. His excellent queen, Philippa of Hainault, was dead, and a rapacious mistress tyrannised over his closing years. He died, June 21, 1377.

Roger, Lord Mortimer.

DIED A. D. 1330.

AMONG the partisans of the unfortunate earl of Lancaster, none acted so conspicuous a part in the transactions which disgraced the close of the second Edward's reign as Roger, Lord Mortimer of Wigmore, one of the most potent barons of the Welsh marches. After the battle of Boroughbridge, he had been condemned for participating in

Lancaster's treason ; but his punishment was remitted for perpetual imprisonment in the tower of London. He had the good fortune, however, to make his escape, by corrupting the fidelity of his keeper, and, hastening to France, joined Edward's queen in her exile in Paris, and was made the chief officer of her household. The graces of his person, and his fascinating manners, soon won upon her affections ; she gave him her confidence, and ultimately sacrificed to him her honour and fidelity.¹

The views of the queen and her paramour were from the first directed to the deposition of Edward ; and they pursued this object with a resolution and boldness worthy of a better cause. But their success could not blind the people to their guilt. Sir James Mackintosh, indeed, considers it doubtful how far the licentious manners of the queen and her paramour rendered their government more generally unacceptable in an age when such vices must have been scarcely known to an ignorant people, and could not be sincerely blamed by a profligate nobility. Nevertheless, men began to pity the dethroned king and insulted husband, and the clergy publicly inveighed in their sermons against the scandalous connexion which existed between the queen and Mortimer. His elevation to the earldom of March increased the haughtiness and ambition of the favourite, and thus drew upon him the hatred and jealousy of the nobles ; while the measures of his administration, and particularly the dishonourable peace with Scotland, proved in the highest degree unpopular. Henry, earl of Lancaster, and Thomas, earl of Kent, entered into an association with several of the other leading nobility, for the purpose of resisting the measures of the favourite, and procuring the emancipation of the young king from his mother's influence ; they also resolved to call Mortimer to account for the murder of the late king, for depriving the regency of its proper influence and authority, and for embezzling the public treasure. But before matters came to an issue, Kent's courage failed him ; and by the intervention of some of the prelates, an agreement was patched up betwixt him and Mortimer. Their reconciliation was in appearance only. A transaction of the most intricate treachery followed. Strange rumours were industriously circulated by the secret agents of Mortimer, that the late king was still alive, and Corfe castle was indicated as the place of his confinement. Meanwhile the earl of Kent received letters, undoubtedly forgeries, from the pope, exhorting him to liberate his brother from prison. Different messengers brought him various flattering promises of co-operation and assistance from several leading personages ; he was assured of aid from Scotland ; and Sir John Mau-travers, the chief actor in the late cruel tragedy in Berkeley castle, not only encouraged him in the belief that his brother was yet alive, but actually undertook to be the bearer of letters from him to the imprisoned king.² Such were the statements which the earl himself on his examination by Sir Robert Howel, when apprehended on a charge of conspiracy against the existing government, ingenuously confessed : he also acknowledged that he had, in consequence of the encouragement then received, written letters to his brother. The infamous policy of the secret instigator of the whole plot was almost forced into

¹ Walsing. 122.

² Rot. Parl. ii. 53.

sight during the proceedings which were directed against the unfortunate earl; but his influence and that of the queen still bore him through. A parliament assembled at Winchester in 1330, pronounced sentence of death and forfeiture against the earl of Kent; and on the 21st of March he was led, by the order of his nephew, to the place of execution; but so general was the sympathy felt for the unfortunate prince, that it was evening before an executioner could be found to perform the office. At last, after a painful suspense of several hours, a felon from the Marshalsea was induced, by a promise of pardon, to strike off his head.³ Mortimer lived to acknowledge the innocence of his victim; but Edmund's fate would have been more generally pitied by posterity, had he not been known to have countenanced the proceedings of the queen's faction before, and rendered himself unpopular by his haughty and oppressive behaviour. To silence public clamour, however, it was found necessary to issue a proclamation, ordering the sheriffs to arrest and imprison any one who should be heard to say that the earl of Kent was unjustly put to death, or suffered for any cause than treason, or that Edward of Caernarvon, the king's father, was still alive.

Mortimer had now reached the highest pinnacle of his fortunes, and began to affect a state and dignity equal, or superior, to that of royalty itself. But the inevitable tendency of a continued and unmixed career of servility, treachery, and rapacity, soon became apparent in the critical position of his affairs. All parties laid aside their reciprocal animosities for a time, and united in their hatred of Mortimer, and resolution to bring the arch-traitor to condign punishment. The king himself, though young in years, had long been galled by the fetters which he knew his mother and her minion to have placed upon him; but so closely was he surrounded by the emissaries of Mortimer, that he felt the utmost caution to be necessary for his own safety in prosecuting any measures for the overthrow of the favourite. At last he ventured to communicate his feelings to Lord Montacute, who engaged the lords Molins and Clifford, Sir John Nevil, Sir Edward Bohun, and others, in the design to seize the person of Mortimer. The castle of Nottingham, in which it was known Mortimer would reside during the session of parliament about to be holden in that city, was fixed upon for the scene of the enterprise. When the time approached for carrying their scheme into effect, Sir William Eland, the governor of the castle, being won over by Montacute, pointed out a subterraneous passage leading from the west side of the rock into the castle, which was unknown to Mortimer, and through which he undertook to introduce the king's friends. Mortimer had received some dark hints of the conspiracy which was forming against him, and had taken every precaution to secure his own safety; he had even informed the council of what he suspected, and boldly charged the young king with being privy to the plot. But on the evening of the same day on which he made this statement, the conspirators gained admission to the castle through the subterraneous passage above noticed, and bursting into the apartment of Mortimer, who was at the moment engaged in consultation with the bishop of Lincoln, led him away as their prisoner.

³ Heming. 271.—Leland Collect. 476, 552.

Next morning the king announced by proclamation that he had taken the reins of government into his own hands.

A parliament was immediately summoned at London for the trial of Mortimer. The principal charges exhibited against him were,—that he had accroached, or assumed the royal prerogative which parliament had committed to ten lay-lords and four prelates,—that he had placed and displaced ministers at his pleasure, and set John Wyard to be a spy on the king,—that he had removed the late king from Kenilworth to Berkeley castle, where he had caused him to be traitorously murdered,—that he had inveigled the earl of Kent into a false charge of treason,—that he had embezzled the royal treasures,—and that he had divided with his associates the twenty thousand marks already paid by the king of Scots.⁴ The peers, after some deliberation, pronounced all these charges to be “notoriously true, and known to them and all the people,” and condemned Mortimer “to be drawn and hanged, as a traitor and enemy of the king and kingdom.” His associates, Sir Simon Bereford, Sir John Mautravers, John Deverel, and Boeges de Bayenne, were condemned to death at the same time. The favourite and Bereford were hanged at a place called the Elms, near Tyburn, on the 29th of November, 1300; but, as the other three were at large, a price was set on their heads. At the solicitation of the pope, the queen-mother was spared the ignominy of a public trial, but was adjudged to have forfeited her estates, and confined to her manor of Risings, where she passed in obscurity the remaining twenty-seven years of her life.

John of Gaunt.

BORN A. D. 1340.—DIED A. D. 1399.

JOHN of Gaunt, or Ghent, was the fourth son of Edward III. Trained to arms under the eyes of his warlike father, he early approved himself worthy of his descent, behaving, as Froissart tells us, very gallantly in many hard-fought fields. By his marriage with Blanche, the surviving co-heiress of Henry, third earl of Lancaster, the honours, titles, and estates of that powerful house, became concentrated in his person; but on the death of his first wife he contracted a still more splendid alliance with Constantia, one of the heiresses of Pedro, surnamed the Cruel, in virtue of which he assumed the imposing title of king of Castile. On his return from Spain, his father's marked partiality for him, and the indications which he frequently manifested of an ambitious disposition, roused the jealousy of the Black prince, who beheld in him a powerful and subtle rival of his own son.

In the latter years of his father's reign, John contrived to manage all things his own way, by means of ‘a huge rout of retainers,’ who bore down all opposition in every quarter. Not satisfied with hectoring the citizens of London, whose turbulent spirit was often directed against his measures, he embroiled himself with the prelacy by his persecution of Wykeham, bishop of Winchester, and even defied the

⁴ Rot. Parl. ii, 52, &c.

vatican itself by the protection and countenance which he afforded to Wickliffe. When that venerable reformer was cited to appear before the primate and the bishop of London, Lancaster took his place beside him, and ordered a chair to be given to him, that he might sit in the presence of his accusers; and when the bishop of London opposed this as disrespectful to the judges, a vehement altercation ensued, in which Lancaster declared "that he would rather pluck the bishop by the hair of his head out of the church, than he would take this at his hand."¹ The assembled citizens, who bore no good will to the duke, supported their bishop, and a great tumult ensued in which the duke narrowly escaped with his life. His palace in the Savoy was attacked and plundered by the mob, and their outrages were only stayed by the interference of the bishop himself. The mayor and aldermen of the city sought to make their peace with the duke by the most lavish protestations of regret for what had happened, and of attachment to his person; but his pride had received too severe a wound to be so easily soothed. He dismissed them from all their offices, and filled up the new magistracy with his own creatures.

The apprehensions justly excited by John of Ghent's ambitious temper, induced the commons to petition King Edward on the death of the Black prince, to make a public declaration in favour of his grandson, Richard of Bourdeaux. The transactions of the preceding reign were yet too fresh in their memories for them to dismiss their fears of a new usurpation of the royal powers during the young king's minority; and no one participated more fully in the general alarm than the princess Joan, the mother of Richard. But to the surprise of all, John of Ghent was one of the first to tender allegiance to his nephew, and submitted, without a murmur, to the decision of the barons, appointing twelve permanent counsellors in aid of the chancellor and treasurer, to direct the reins of government during the minority of the king. Richard's first parliament showed that the influence of Lancaster was somewhat on the wane; and the ill success of an expedition to Bretagne, intrusted to his command, sunk him still lower in public estimation. Accordingly, in all the popular tumults of this reign, we find John of Gaunt specially marked out as an object of the people's dislike. When Wat Tyler's mob held sway in the city of London, they obliged the passengers not only to swear allegiance to King Richard, but also that they never would receive any king of the name of John: "And this," says Holinshed, "was the envy which they bore to the duke of Lancaster, John of Gaunt." His palace in the Savoy was also again attacked and thoroughly sacked; and lest their motives should be mistaken, the duke's massy plate was cut into pieces, and his jewels ground to powder and mingled with the dust. Alarmed at these unequivocal manifestations of hostile feeling towards him, the duke retired into Scotland, where he remained until invited by royal proclamation to return to England and authorised to travel with a body-guard for his better personal protection. Notwithstanding, however, of this act of royal grace, strong suspicions still continued to be entertained against him, and while employed in France in the month of May 1384, the council resolved upon his arrest, determined probably to this severe

¹ Fox.

measure by the information afforded by a Carmelite friar of a conspiracy having been formed for the purpose of placing the crown upon the duke's head. Informed of what was intended against him, Lancaster, on his return to England, contrived to escape the vigilance of his enemies and reach his castle of Pontefract, where he prepared for open resistance.

In 1386, at the invitation of the king of Portugal, and induced by the hope of obtaining the crown of Castile, Lancaster, and his brother-in-law, the earl of Cambridge, led an army into Portugal to assist John against the king of Castile. His daughters, by both his wives, accompanied him, and he left the care of his possessions in England to his son, the earl of Derby. Richard beheld his uncle's preparations for departure with great pleasure, and in his anxiety to hurry him out of the kingdom, appropriated one-half of the supplies for the year to defray the expenses of the expedition. The enterprise was in its results well-calculated to gratify the family pride of the duke, for the king of Portugal accepted the hand of Philippa, his eldest daughter by his first wife, while Henry, the son and heir of the king of Castile, married Catherine, the duke's only child by his marriage with Constantia. Two hundred thousand crowns were paid to Lancaster to defray the expenses of his expedition, and an annuity of one hundred thousand florins was settled on him, and another to the same amount on his duchess. Meanwhile England was threatened with an invasion from France, and the cabal headed by the duke of Gloucester, was formed against Richard's administration. But the firmness which the young king so unexpectedly betrayed, aided by the support which both the duke of Lancaster and his son, the earl of Derby, animated by their jealousy of the rival pretensions of Gloucester, hastened to tender him, enabled him to avert the crisis, and chastise the aspiring insolence of the new rebel.

When age had somewhat chilled the ambition of Lancaster, and he had thus ceased to be formidable, his nephew rewarded his services against the recent faction by granting to him for life the sovereignty of Guienne. And when, upon the death of Constantia, his second wife, the uxorious duke married Catherine Swynford, who was only a knight's widow, and had been employed by his first duchess to educate her daughter, in which situation she bore him three sons, the marriage was resented as a disgrace by all the other princes of the blood; but the king himself, to please his uncle, approved of it, legitimated the children, and raised the eldest son to the dignity of earl of Somerset. He died in 1399, soon after the banishment of his son Henry.

Sir Walter Manny.

DIED A. D. 1372.

Few more illustrious names grace the annals of England's chivalry than that of Sir Walter Manny. The son of one of the earl of Hainault's bravest knights, he amply sustained the honour of his gallant family in many a hard-fought field, and by his prowess contributed more than any single arm, with the exception, perhaps, of the Black

prince himself, to the success of those chivalrous expeditions which England undertook against the banded powers of France on their own soil. Though a foreigner by birth as well as by lineage, he made England the country of his adoption at an early age, and all his laurels were won in her service. We, therefore, hold ourselves fully entitled to class him amongst those illustrious men whose names and fortunes are identified with the period of English history to which they belong.

When Isabella of England, accompanied by her son, arrived at Valenciennes to solicit the aid of William, earl of Hainault, against her husband, Edward II., the young Walter, whom the earl had taken under his own guardianship after the death of his father, won the friendship of the prince of Wales, and would have accompanied him to England if his patron had not disapproved of the proposal at the time; but he was soon afterwards sent over in the suite of the lady Philippa, Earl William's daughter, in the quality of page. His first martial service was performed in the camp before Berwick, when that place was vigorously besieged by Edward III. at the head of his northern nobles, and gallantly defended by Lord Marr and Sir Alexander Seaton. In the battle of Halidon-hill, so disastrous to the Scottish arms, Walter de Manny bore himself so gallantly, that all confessed him worthy of the honour of knighthood, which the king bestowed upon him on the field.

In 1337, Edward having resolved to invade France from the Flemish frontiers, the joint command of the expedition to open the Scheldt was intrusted to Sir Walter and the earl of Derby. The forces placed under their command on this occasion, consisted of 600 men-at-arms, and 2000 archers. The garrison, on the isle of Cadsant, commanding the navigation of the river, amounted to 5000; 1000 of whom were men-at-arms. As the English squadron bore down, Lord Derby, standing on the poop of his vessel, exclaimed to Sir Walter, whose ship was at a little distance, "What think you, Sir Walter, shall we assail these Flemings, or delay?" "As wind and tide are in our favour, it becomes us not to lose them," replied Manny, adding at the same time, "In the name of God and St George, let us run close on shore!" "In the name of God and St George, be it so!" rejoined the earl, and the signal for attack was instantly given by the trumpets. The English archers drew their bows 'stiff and strong,' and quickly cleared the outworks of their defenders, while the barons and knights, with their men-at-arms, plunging into the sea, made good their landing, repulsed the headlong charge of the Flemish horsemen, and carried the whole works by assault. This success having opened the way for the English army, Edward soon afterwards arrived, and prepared to invest Cambray. In the meanwhile, Sir Walter having collected fifty lances, proceeded to redeem a promise which he had made in the presence of certain noble knights and fair dames, that he would be the first that should enter France, and take some castle or stronghold. For this purpose he spurred with his gallant band through Brabant, and having gained the wood of Blaton, he there broke his design to his companions, and suggested that they should surprise the town of Montaigne. The proposal was received with acclamations, and the gallant band arrived at Montaigne a little before sunrise; but although they entered the town without opposition, they found the garrison of the

castle fully prepared for them, and would have been speedily overpowered by numbers, had they not succeeded in making good their retreat. Sir Walter, however, was not to be thus baffled in his object. He persuaded his companions, instead of returning straight to the English camp, to diverge by Conde and Valenciennes in search of adventures, and the result gratified their most ardent wishes. The governor of Bouchain, mistaking them for the advanced guard of a great army, opened his gates to them; and the castle of St Eveque, at no great distance from Cambray, was taken by a coup-de-main.

In the fight with the powerful fleet of Philip of France, off the coast of Hampshire, Sir Walter Manny was the first to board the enemy. He sprung from his ship on the deck of the Christopher, and his example being followed by other knights, that huge vessel was speedily in the hands of the English. The fight has been described as a 'very murderous and horrible' one, but it ended in the total defeat of the Normans. We next find this star of chivalry engaged in the relief of the fortress of Hennebon, then gallantly held out by Montford's countess against Charles of Blois. At the head of a small, but select body of men, Manny cast himself into the town at the very moment when it was about to be given up to the enemy; his arrival changed the face of affairs, and the negotiations for surrender being broken off, the troops of Charles renewed their attacks with more determined fury. A catapult of more than ordinary dimensions had greatly annoyed the townspeople by the enormous masses of stone which it cast into the place. Sir Walter was at dinner with the countess, when one of these projectiles came crashing through the roof of an adjoining house, to the great alarm of the ladies; but Sir Walter instantly vowed to destroy the machine, and rising from table with the other knights, in a few minutes sallied forth from a postern gate, overturned and hewed the catapult to pieces, burned the sow, and threw the whole camp of the enemy into confusion. On their return, after having performed this gallant deed, the enemy, having recovered from their surprise, pressed hard upon them; but the knights stood their ground until their archers and attendants had passed the ditch in safety, after which they crossed the drawbridge themselves, and were received with hearty congratulations by the townspeople, while the countess "came down from the castle to meet them, and with a most cheerful countenance, kissed Sir Walter and all his companions, one after another, like a noble and valiant dame." The consequence of this sortie was, that the corps employed in the siege under Prince Louis of Spain, abandoned their camp the same evening, and marched to join Charles himself before the castle of Arrai. From this latter place, Prince Louis marched upon Dinant, which opened its gates to him, and then passing into Lower Brittany, landed at Quimperle, and proceeded to lay waste the surrounding country. But Sir Walter, hearing of these proceedings, resolved to have another and bolder stroke at his enemy. With the sanction of the countess, he placed his men-at-arms and 3000 archers on board of ship, and set sail for the harbour, where the fleet of Louis lay. On his arrival at Quimperle he found the enemy's vessels but slightly guarded, and immediately made himself master of the whole. He then set out to intercept the prince, who, with 6000 men, was hurrying back to the coast, having learned the arrival of his antagonist.

They met, and a fierce conflict ensued, in which Louis's whole force was nearly cut to pieces, or made prisoners, the prince himself only escaping with a small retinue.

On his return to Hennebon, Sir Walter assaulted and took many places of considerable strength, but little could be done towards the ultimate deliverance of Brittany, without fresh reinforcements from Edward. Carhaix fell into Charles's hands, and Hennebon was again invested. This time the siege was pressed more vigorously than before; but the courage and resources of De Manny seemed to rise with the difficulties of his position. Hearing that his friends, Sir John Botelot, and Sir Matthew Trelawney, who had been made prisoners by the enemy, were about to be sacrificed to Prince Louis's thirst for revenge, he called his knights around him, and proposed that they should immediately attempt the rescue of their comrades. The plan proposed was sufficiently daring; but the courage and high enthusiasm of the parties engaged in it, directed by the genius and indomitable valour of De Manny, secured its success. The prisoners were relieved at the very moment when they expected to be led forth to execution; and Charles, perceiving that Hennebon, with such defenders, was not likely soon to fall into his hands, dismissed the greater number of his followers, and retired to Carhaix.

In the campaign in Gascony with the earl of Derby, Sir Walter gave ample evidence of his being possessed of the higher qualities of a military commander. The fall of Bergerac was chiefly due to his skill in combining the most rapid movements with the most deliberate and well-advised plans of attack. Town after town, and castle after castle, fell before his genius, till the English standard floated over almost every stronghold in Gascony. One of the most splendid victories obtained by the English arms in this campaign, was wholly due to the valour and sagacity of Sir Walter. The earl of Derby, with Manny in his train, had marched to the relief of Auberoche, then closely invested by the count de Lisle. Orders had been sent to Lord Pembroke, who commanded at Bergerac, to join them on the march; but before he came up, they found themselves with a force of only 300 men-at-arms, and 600 hobeler archers, in the presence of De Lisle, at the head of 10,000 men. In this emergency, De Manny's counsel was prompt, but wise:—"Gentlemen," said he, addressing a council of war, "it were a shame to us were our friends to perish, and we so nigh to them. Let us mount our horses, skirt this wood, and advance upon the enemy's camp. We will come upon them unexpectedly, just as they are sitting down to supper, and with St George to aid us, they shall be discomfited." The proposal was well received, and instantly put into execution with complete success. The French were beaten down before they knew whence their assailants came, and De Lisle himself was taken prisoner.

The winter of 1344-5 was spent by Manny in well-earned indulgence amid the gaieties of the viceregal court at Bourdeaux; but the campaign was early opened by the duke of Normandy at the head of a large army, and the indefatigable Manny required no summons to the post of danger or enterprise. The important castle of Auguillon was threatened, and Sir Walter, in the face of 100,000 men, threw himself into it with 300 men-at-arms, a corps of archers, and good store of

'meal.' In the month of May, the duke of Normandy sat down before this stronghold, but October came and its gallant defenders still held out as vigorously as ever. At last the besiegers determined to cross the river and cut off all means of foraging from the garrison. A bridge was with this view constructed at a prodigious expense of labour, but just as the troops were about to put themselves in motion upon it, Manny let slip three heavy vessels, which carried down by a rapid current, struck the props and swept them away. A second bridge, stronger and better provided with the means of warding off a similar attack, was instantly constructed; but Manny, in a single night, cut down or rendered abortive the labour of several weeks. Again, De Lisle resumed his bridge-building, and with more success; his army crossed the Garonne, and the castle was assaulted without intermission for several successive weeks. Battering-rams were wrought incessantly against the walls,—catapults and other engines poured showers of stones, beams, and darts, upon the battlements,—while from large moveable towers or belfries, the cross-bow men and archers sent flights of arrows within the walls. Still the brave De Manny, untired in spirit and unexhausted in resources, held out, till the assailants, despairing of conquest by any other means, thought of converting the assault into a blockade; but the battle of Crecy changed the face of affairs, and the siege of Auguillon was suddenly raised by the duke, who set off to support his father.

When the duke was fairly gone, Manny, loathing to be shut up in inactivity whilst his brethren in arms were gaining such splendid laurels elsewhere, sent for a 'great knight,' whom he had captured, and demanded to know what sum he was willing to pay for his ransom. "Three thousand crowns," replied his prisoner. "I know you are nearly related to the duke of Normandy," answered Manny, "that you are much esteemed by him, and one of his counsellors. I will set you free upon your honour provided you will instantly go to the duke and obtain a passport for myself and twenty others, that we may ride through France to Calais, paying courteously for whatever we may require. If you obtain this, I will hold you free from your ransom, and also be much indebted to you; but if you fail, you will return within a month to this fortress as your prison." The knight accepted the proposal and obtained the wished-for passport; and such was the high faith and courtesy of those days, that under its protection, Manny, with his twenty companions, set out to travel the whole breadth of France, and were well received and hospitably treated wherever they came. At Orleans, however, Sir Walter was arrested by order of King Philip and conducted to Paris, where he was cast into prison; but the duke of Normandy hastened to remonstrate against such a breach of knightly faith, and declared, that unless Sir Walter was instantly liberated, he would never again wield sword or lance in defence of the French crown. The king yielded to his son's representation, and Manny was not only set at liberty, but received various costly jewels and other gifts from Philip, which he accepted on the condition that he should be permitted to return them if his royal master disapproved of his retaining them. The conclusion of the story we give in Froissart's own words:—"He arrived at Calais," says the chronicler, "where he was well-received by the king of England, who, being informed by Sir

Walter of his presents he had from the king of France, said, 'Sir Walter, you have hitherto most loyally served us, and we hope you will continue to do so : send back to King Philip his presents, for you have no right to keep them. We have enough, thank God, for you and for ourselves, and are fully disposed to do you all the good in our power for the services you have rendered us.' Thereupon, Sir Walter took out all the jewels, and giving them to his cousin, the lord of Mansoe, said :—' Ride into France to King Philip, and recommend me to him, and tell him that I thank him many times for the fine jewels which he presented me with, but that it is not agreeable to the will and pleasure of my lord, the king of England, that I retain them.' So the knight did as he was directed," continues Froissart ; " but the king of France would not take back the jewels, but gave them to the lord of Mansoe, who thanked the king for them, and had no inclination to refuse them."

During the prevalence of the plague in England, and while London was threatened by that dreadful visitant, Sir Walter exerted himself with great humanity to soothe the sufferings of the people. " It pleased God," says Henrie, " in this dismal time to stir up the heart of this noble knight to have respect to the danger that might fall in the time of this pestilence, then begun in England, if the churches and churchyards in London might not suffice to bury the multitude. Wherefore, he purchased a piece of ground near St John's street, called Spittlecroft, without the bars in West Smithfield, of the master and brethren of St Bartholomew Spittle, containing thirteen acres and a rood, and caused the same to be enclosed and consecrated by Ralph Stratford, bishop of London, at his own proper costs and charges. In which place, in the year following—Stow reports—were buried more than 50,000 persons, as is affirmed by the king's charter, and by an inscription which he read upon a stone cross sometime standing in the Charter-house yard."

In 1360, Sir Walter accompanied the army which Edward led to the gates of Paris, and when it was proposed to withdraw without having measured lances with any part of the garrison, deeming such a thing a disgrace to English chivalry, he requested and obtained permission to make an incursion as far as the barrier ; and he effected his purpose after a long and furious encounter with the Parisian knights. Nine years after this, Sir Walter closed his military services with conducting a destructive inroad from Calais into the heart of France. He then retired to his home in London, where he employed the remaining years of his life in calmly preparing for his last change. He died in 1372, and was buried with great pomp in the cloister of a Carthusian convent founded by himself ; the king himself, and a long train of nobility honoured his funeral with their attendance. He left behind him one only child, a daughter, named Anne, who marrying the earl of Pembroke, transferred to that noble house all the possessions of her family both in England and Hainault.

Richard II.

BORN A. D. 1365.—DIED A. D. 1399.

It was the great calamity of this worthless ruler, that he became, at the mere age of childhood, to so great an extent his own master. He was not more than eleven when he made, as king of England, his entry into London, amid all the extravagance of splendour and pageantry which characterized the public exhibitions of that age. There were mock castles and turrets, and wine-fountains, and angels offering crowns of gold, and bright maidens scattering golden showers, with all the mirth and madness of popular festivals. Young as he was, it may easily be conceived that so brilliant a display, contrasting so vividly with the sad seclusion of his widowed mother's residence at Sheen, might first kindle within him that taste for show and revelry which disgraced his riper years, and, by oppressing his people with taxation, hastened his destruction. Now, however, his popularity was unbounded. His father, the Black Prince, had supported the cause of good government to the last, and the son, attractive in person and engaging in manner, seemed destined to retrieve the errors which had accompanied the decrepitude of the grandfather. In the following year, his coronation renewed, with added splendour, the popular rejoicings; but the first meeting of parliament was ominous of a troubled reign; and it is exceedingly difficult, amid conflicting authorities and confused statements, to determine the balance of delinquency between faction and misrule. The king's uncles and the king's favourites were at fierce variance, and, while to some of them the quarrel was fatal, none of them came out of the contest unscathed. The middle classes seem to have looked on with an observant eye, and with a shrewd estimate of England's real interests. The Commons' house objected to the expense of the government and the court,—to the system of favouritism,—to the unprofitable cost of the continental fortresses,—and in general, to the entire system of national policy. To these just remonstrances, the only reply seems to have been evasive promises of amendment, accompanied by urgent demands for heavy subsidies. Among other suggestions as to the most expedient mode of raising the supplies, a poll-tax was recommended by the lords; and the commons, in evil hour, consented to the imposition. It was rigorously levied; and the severe exaction, added to the gross misconduct of the collectors, raised the people to almost universal insurrection, and they assembled from the metropolitan counties, on Blackheath, to the amount of not fewer than one hundred thousand men. They gained partial possession of London, surprised the tower, and put to death the archbishop of Canterbury, Sir Robert Hales the 'treasurer,' Legge, one of the farmers of the tax, and several others. In this crisis, Richard—who seems to have been personally popular with the insurgents—behaved with uncommon spirit; notwithstanding the advice of those who dissuaded him from conceding to a set of 'shoeless ribalds,' he boldly presented himself to the furious mob, first at Mile End, and a second time in Smithfield. This last interview was decisive. Wat Tyler, who appears to have

menaced the sovereign, was struck down by Walworth, mayor of London; and Richard, with singular promptitude and address, persuaded the populace to follow him to the fields near Islington, where they hastily dispersed at the appearance of an armed force. The government, relieved from its apprehensions, revoked the amnesty which had been proclaimed, and sent a special commission into the country, with Tresilian at its head, and that worthy prototype of Jefferies is said to have saved himself much trouble by taking accusation as synonymous with guilt. The nation, in fact, seems to have been at this time in a state of strange commotion; and it is easy to perceive from the nature of the doctrines said to have been enforced by some of the public teachers of the day, that the lower orders were roused to a fierce resentment of the encroachments and oppressions of their superiors.

When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who then was the gentleman?

—was the pithy text of one of their favourite preachers; and it affords sufficient indication of the spirit engendered by the circumstances of the time. The wars of Edward, the necessities of the government, and the factions of a weak minority, had taught the people the tremendous lesson of their united strength, though they had not yet learned to systematise their combination. The king's uncles, the majority of them at least, seem to have been ambitious; the motives of the duke of Lancaster are especially questionable, and had he been more successful in war, or more consistent in conduct, he might have effected the highest designs. The strong feeling and bold character of the times are manifest in the works and history of Wickliffe. That ecclesiastical reformer was the precursor of Luther; his intrepid assailing of hierarchical abuses, and his powerful exhibition of evangelical truth, entitle him to the fame both of a confessor and a discoverer.

But if, in the early deeds of Richard, there was somewhat of promise, it was not sustained by his after-actions. He attached himself to favourites, and the old historians describe circumstances of indecency that give reason to doubt the purity of his regard. He was passionate to folly, and betrayed a large measure of that vindictive disposition which seems to have been hereditary in his family. His domestic expenditure was a mad exhibition of ultra-extravagance; and his personal vanity was gratified at a reckless cost. He set the Commons at defiance—"he would not displace the meanest scullion in his kitchen, for their pleasure." At length this reached the point beyond which endurance was cowardice, and he was compelled to submit for a season; but with the fixed purpose of re-asserting and avenging at a more convenient time his violated dignity. His chief favourite, who had by an act of insulting profligacy, excited the indignation of the duke of Gloucester, one of the king's uncles, inflamed the resentment of the monarch, and the duke's life was endangered. The king summoned his militia, and the barons armed their retainers, and the people sided with the nobles. Richard and his councillors shrunk from the unequal contest; he was compelled to dismiss his obnoxious minions, and for a moment stood in peril of deposition. The struggle between despotism and insubordination did not, however, go this length, and the king was again

placed under tutelage; but the duke of Gloucester abused his triumph by acts of unrelenting cruelty: the parliament, which seconded his designs, obtained from some the distinctive epithet 'merciless,' though others exalted it by the doubtful appellation 'wonderful.' Richard's cousin, Henry of Lancaster, earl of Derby, son of John of Gaunt, and nephew of the duke of Gloucester, although one of the insurgent lords, and mainly concerned in defeating the king's array, opposed these sanguinary proceedings.

In 1389, however, Richard, by a bold and decisive step, re-assumed his authority, and reigned for some years in comparative tranquillity. But his vindictive spirit had never forgiven the injuries of former years, and in 1397, under forms which were a mere mockery of judgment, he procured the impeachment and condemnation of the more obnoxious of his opponents, and among these the earl of Arundel was beheaded, and the duke of Gloucester secretly murdered. The atrocity of this act was enhanced by the treachery which prepared the way for its execution. The king himself, with coward craft, decoyed his uncle, under fair pretences, from his house at Pleshy, and drew him into an ambuscade. But the very steps which were designed for the advancement of his authority became the precursors of his fall. His impolitic barbarity roused the general indignation, and a feeling of insecurity agitated the minds of some of his most powerful nobles. A conversation—of which the particulars are on record, but the true character of which it is not now possible to ascertain—between Henry, earl of Derby, lately made duke of Hereford, and Mowbray, duke of Norfolk, led to consequences which deprived Richard of his crown. Both those powerful noblemen were banished, but Hereford was too popular to be offended with impunity: his partisans were active in his cause, and during the king's absence in Ireland the duke returned from France, and a formidable army soon collected round his standard. The intelligence was late in reaching Richard, and after receiving it he lingered in Ireland till his cause was lost. He landed at last in Wales, and took refuge in the strong castle of Conway. From this asylum he was drawn by the persuasions of the earl of Northumberland, and brought into the presence of Henry, who spoke him fair, but transferred him to safe custody. A few days brought these transactions to a termination, Richard signed his resignation, and Henry of Bolingbroke assumed the state and title of King of England. The instrument of deposition bears date September 29, 1399.¹

Thomas, Duke of Gloucester.

DIED A. D. 1357.

In the first parliament held after Richard's Scottish campaign, Thomas of Woodstock, earl of Buckingham, was rewarded by his nephew with the dukedom of Gloucester, but the gift was too small for the inordinate ambition of the man. The absence of his elder brother, the duke of Lancaster, in Portugal, afforded him a favourable oppor-

¹ Rot. Parl. iii. 416.

tunity for grasping at the chief ascendancy in the councils of the young prince. The earls of Warwick, Arundel, Nottingham, and Derby, attached themselves to Gloucester's party, and the first object which the new faction aimed at was the establishment of a permanent council, similar to that which for a time overawed John, Henry III., and Edward II. Richard at first resisted these attempts with becoming spirit, and threatened to dissolve the parliament which entertained Gloucester's proposals, but was at last compelled to yield a reluctant assent to the establishment of a commission with power to inquire into the conduct of the officers in his household and courts of law, and generally to correct abuses, wherever existing in any department of the government, by such remedies as might appear to them 'good and profitable.'¹ The duke was of the number, and of course headed the commission. His first victim was the chancellor De La Pole, earl of Suffolk, one of Richard's minions, who was accused of having obtained from the king grants beyond his deserts, of having enriched himself by defrauding the crown, "as for paying," says Speed, "to the king's coffers but twentie marks yearly for a fee farm, whereof himself received threescore and ten," and of having put the great seal to illegal charters and pardons. Against these charges De La Pole was ably defended by his brother-in-law, Sir Richard Scroop, but his judges pronounced some of the charges proved, and the chancellor was punished by fine and imprisonment. Irritated by these and other proceedings of his uncle, Richard appealed to arms, but the confederates had foreseen and were prepared for this issue. At the head of 40,000 men, the duke of Gloucester marched upon London, and in the audience which Richard found himself compelled to grant, boldly appealed—according to the phrase of the time—the king's chief favourites, namely, De Vere, duke of Ireland, De La Pole, the archbishop of York, the chief justice Tresilian, and Sir Nicholas Bramber. Suffolk fled to the continent; the duke of Ireland into Wales; the prelate obtained shelter and concealment in the north. De Vere raised the royal standard in Cheshire, and the king secretly sanctioned the measure, while Gloucester eagerly availed himself of this circumstance to inquire of the learned in the law whether there were not circumstances which might release a vassal from the fealty and homage which he had sworn to his sovereign, and in a meeting at Huntingdon agreed with the earls of Arundel and Warwick, and the lord Thomas Mortimer, "to depose Richard, and take the crown under his own custody." Whatever may have been Gloucester's ultimate intention, it was defeated by the well-judged opposition of the earls of Derby and Nottingham. But disappointed in his main object, the series of impeachments, trials, and executions, which followed the defeat and dispersion of the king's party, amply gratified Gloucester's revenge, who seemed determined to annihilate every friend that the evil fortunes of his nephew had left him in his adversity. Among these there was none whom greater efforts were made to save, and who was more worthy of them, than Sir Simon Burley, who had been Richard's guardian by the appointment of his gallant father, and whom the young king and his queen regarded with filial affection. Richard earnestly solicited

¹ Rot. Parl. iii. 375.

his uncle to spare him; and the queen, on her knees, seconded the entreaties of her husband; but nothing could move the 'finty-hearted Gloucester,' and in a few weeks this 'gentle knight,' as Froissart calls him, was led forth to execution, without the previous formality of obtaining the king's assent having been complied with.

It was at a general council held after Easter, 1389, that Richard, by a bold and decisive step, suddenly emancipated himself from the thralldom in which Gloucester had long held him. During the deliberations of this council, the king suddenly required the duke of Gloucester to tell him his age. "Your highness," returned the duke, "is in your twenty-second year." "Then," said Richard, "I am old enough to manage my own affairs. It is not fitting that I should remain longer under the control of tutors than any ward in my dominions. I thank ye, my lords, for your past services, but shall not require them any longer." The council was immediately dismissed; Gloucester, finding no one prepared to resist so unexpected a blow, departed from court in sullen discontent, and although Richard seemed not unwilling to conciliate his uncle, the latter disdained to cultivate the friendship of his nephew, and made himself the soul of every faction that opposed the king's wishes. Once, indeed, he affected a wish to retire from the kingdom and join the Christians in their crusade against the idolaters of Prussia, but he so easily allowed himself to be turned aside from the design, that it was pretty evident he never seriously contemplated it. Avarice at this period was one of the besetting passions of the great, and Gloucester shared in this vice too. He was, says Froissart, "cunning and malicious, and continually soliciting favours of King Richard, and pleading poverty though he abounded in wealth; for he was constable of England, duke of Gloucester, earl of Buckingham, Essex, and Northampton, and enjoyed, besides, pensions from the king's exchequer to the amount of 4,000 rubles a-year. And he would not exert himself in any way," adds the worthy chronicler, "if he were not well paid." This passion proved a fertile source of trouble both to Gloucester himself and his nephew. The marriage of Henry of Lancaster to the younger sister and co-heiress of Gloucester's duchess, whose father, the earl of Stafford, was one of the richest noblemen in England, was a sad blow to Gloucester's avaricious hopes. "The duke," observes Froissart, "had no inclination to laugh when he heard of the projected match, for it would now be necessary to divide an inheritance which he considered wholly as his own. When he learned that both his brothers had been concerned in this matter, he became melancholy, and never afterwards loved the duke of Lancaster as he had hitherto done." Richard, as we have seen, did much to gratify his uncle's propensity, but failed to quench his thirst for riches. He purchased his consent to a matrimonial alliance between the royal families of England and France at a high price, and seemed prepared even for farther sacrifices to his relative, had not the latter by conduct nothing short of infatuation, drawn upon his own head the resentment of his nephew. The style of language in which the duke dared to indulge himself in the presence of his sovereign is well illustrated in the following narrative from Grafton. The duke of Bretagne on repaying a loan which he had obtained from the king of England, demanded restitution of the town

and haven of Brest which he had impledged in security for the repayment. Richard resigned the town upon the fulfilment of the stipulated terms; but Gloucester hesitated not to condemn his nephew's conduct in this instance as weak and impolitic, and even charged him in the hearing of some disbanded soldiers with timidly resigning what he ought to have retained by force of arms rather than have relinquished. Richard stung by the reflection, and scarcely imagining that he heard aright, exclaimed, "What is it you say, uncle?" The duke repeated the offensive words, whereupon the insulted and indignant prince passionately rejoined, "Think you that I am either a fool or a merchant, to sell my land? No! by John Baptist, no! But our cousin, the duke of Bretagne, having paid the sum for which his town and haven were impledged to me, both honour and conscience require that I should restore it." The historian informs us that the duke's rude speech made a strong impression upon Richard's mind, and that he hated his insolent relative ever after "for the brand of cowardice he had cast upon him." Richard's friends marked and cherished the prince's growing disgust, and reports were soon circulated that the duke meditated to seize and imprison the king, and place the earl of March upon the throne. Richard now adopted vigorous and decisive steps against his disaffected uncle. He obtained the sanction of both the dukes of York and Lancaster for the arrest of Gloucester, and personally headed the party appointed to apprehend him. After enjoying his uncle's hospitality at Pleshy, he invited his unsuspecting relative to accompany him on his return to London, but instantly delivered him over to the custody of the earl marshal, who conveyed the duke to Calais where he was lodged in the castle. The duke and his associates were now made to experience the same bitter fate and hard dealing to which they had so often subjected others. They were appealed of treason by the earls of Kent, Huntingdon, Salisbury, Sir William Scroop, and others; and their trial was fixed for the ensuing parliament.² On the 21st of September, 1357, a writ was issued to the earl marshal, commanding him to bring the body of his prisoner to answer in parliament to the appeal of treason against him. Three days thereafter an answer was returned that the prisoner was dead. Strong suspicions were entertained of foul play in the case, but the lords appellants demanded judgment, and the duke was declared a traitor.³

"In the first year of the next reign," says Lingard, "a paper was read in parliament, purporting to be a confession upon oath of John Hall, a servant to the earl of Nottingham (the earl marshal). He said, or was made to say, that, some day in September, the duke was brought from the castle of Calais to a hotel called the Prince's Inn, and delivered to two persons, servants of the king, and the earl of Rutland. That they took him up stairs, advised him to send for a confessor, as he must die, and, after the departure of the priest, smothered him between two beds, in presence of himself and three others. As soon as this paper had been read, Hall was condemned, and immediately executed without having been heard, or even presented before his judges. Though eight persons were named in the deposition, as being concerned in the transaction, none of them were examined or molested. If we reflect how much it was for

² Rot. Parl. iii. 374, 449—452.

³ Ib. 378.

the interest of Henry IV. to have Richard believed the author of Gloucester's death, all these circumstances tend to excite a suspicion that he could not prove it."⁴ Froissart's words are: "As I was informed, when he had dined, and was about to have washen his hands, there came into the chamber four men, and cast suddenly a towell about the duke's neck, and drew so sore that he fell to the earth, and so they strangled him, and closed his eyes. And when he was dead they despoiled him, and bare him to his bed, and laid him between the sheets naked, and then they issued out of the chamber into the hall and said openly how a palsy had taken the duke of Gloucester, and so he died. These words were abroad in the town of Calais: some believed them—some not."⁵ There is little historical evidence to shelter the king from the charge of having procured his uncle's death. It would have been easy to have laid such information before parliament as would have exculpated Richard, had any such existed; it was eminently for the king's interest that he should be freed from the general suspicion which Gloucester's death in the time and place of it excited; but it is certain that nothing of the kind was attempted, and the legitimate conclusion is that Richard found it impossible to disguise his villany by any other means than that of enveloping the whole transaction in mystery.

Sir John Holand.

DIED A. D. 1400.

SIR JOHN HOLAND, a knight renowned for his chivalrous exploits, but infamous for his cold-blooded assassinations, was the uterine brother of Richard. His mother, the princess of Wales, had for her first husband Sir Thomas Holand, who, in right of his wife, was created earl of Kent and Lord Wake of Liddel. She bore him two sons, Thomas Holand, who inherited the honours of his father, and John, the subject of this memoir, afterwards created earl of Huntingdon and duke of Exeter. This monster in human shape was known to have strangled with his own hands a Carmelite friar, who had presented to the king a written paper containing the particulars of a conspiracy alleged to have been formed against him by the duke of Lancaster, and who had been committed to his charge for future examination. Richard drove the assassin from his presence, but was afterwards prevailed upon, through the intercession of his mother, to grant him a full pardon.¹ Within the space of one year, Sir John again disgraced the knightly character by perpetrating another base assassination. One of his esquires had been killed in a brawl by an archer belonging to the earl of Stafford. When informed of the incident, Sir John swore in his wrath that he would neither eat nor drink until he had avenged it, and he kept his vow by plunging his dagger into the bosom of Lord Stafford's son, whom he accidentally encountered a short time afterwards. When informed of his victim's name and rank, he exclaimed, "Be it so! I had rather have put him to death than one of less rank, for by that I have better avenged the loss of my squire." The unfortunate

⁴ Vol. iii. p. 246.

⁵ Berner's Froiss. ii. c. 226.

¹ Rym. vii. 46.

father loudly demanded justice on the murderer, while the queen-mother again attempted to mediate in his favour; but Richard confiscated the property of the assassin, and declared that he would certainly cause him to be hanged if he ever left the sanctuary of St John of Beverley. In a few days the unhappy mother died of grief, and softened, perhaps, by this fatal catastrophe, Richard again issued a pardon to his guilty relative, who was soon afterwards married to the second daughter of the duke of Lancaster.

The commission of these atrocities, however, did not eclipse the fame of this warlike knight, who made himself known and dreaded wherever he had an opportunity of breaking a lance or wielding a battle-axe, whether in tournament or mortal combat. While in Spain with his father-in-law, a herald arrived at his quarters with a letter from Sir Reginald de Roze, a gallant French knight in the service of the king of Castile, in which he entreated Sir John, "for the love of his mistress, that he would deliver him from his vow by tilting with him three courses with the lance, three attacks with the sword, three with the battle-axe, and three with the dagger. The challenger at the same time offered his antagonist the choice of the place of combat. When Sir John Holland," continues Froissart, "had perused this letter, he smiled, and looking at the herald, said, 'Friend, thou art welcome, for thou hast brought me what pleases me much, and I accept the challenge. Thou wilt remain in my lodging with my people, and in the course of to-morrow thou shalt have my answer whether the tilts are to be in Galicia or Castile.' The herald replied, 'God grant it!' Sir John went to the duke of Lancaster and showed the letter the herald had brought. 'Well,' said the duke, 'and have you accepted it?' 'Yes, by my faith, have I! And why not? I love nothing better than fighting, and the knight entreats me to indulge him; consider, therefore, where you would choose it should take place.'" The combat took place at Entença, and Sir John gained great applause by his gallantry in the jousts. On many other occasions Sir John distinguished himself as a right valiant and skilful knight, and gained the meed of gallantry from all who witnessed his deeds; his foul murders appear to have little affected his reputation amongst the gentle lords and ladies of that chivalrous age. With the fall of Richard the hopes of the Howlands fell also, and they eagerly entered into Salisbury's conspiracy for seizing the person of King Henry at Windsor castle. On the failure of that bold scheme, the earl of Huntingdon fled to the coast of Essex, where he fell into the hands of the late duke of Gloucester's vassals, who instantly revenged their master's death—in which they with justice, perhaps, regarded him as having been an active instrument—by beheading him with an axe.

John, Earl of Salisbury.

DIED A. D. 1400.

ONE of the leaders in the first and most formidable conspiracy which was formed against Henry, after he had gained the summit of his ambition, was John de Montacute, earl of Salisbury, one of the most

accomplished noblemen of the age. In Henry's first parliament, Thomas, Lord Morley, had charged Salisbury in very coarse terms, with the crime of treason to both the late and the present king, and especially with having instigated Richard to some of his most unpopular measures; Salisbury indignantly repelled the accusation, but narrowly escaped a traitor's doom, with the loss only of those honours with which his services had been rewarded in the preceding reign. Lingard remarks it as a singular circumstance, that although the earl was called upon for his defence, in common with the other lords who had advised and framed the appeal of treason against the duke of Gloucester, yet he was unnoticed in the judgment of the lords: ¹ this may have resulted from Henry's strong personal dislike to Salisbury, who had early rendered himself peculiarly offensive to him, by his undertaking the mission which Richard despatched to Charles VI., with the view of breaking off the match betwixt Henry and the daughter of the duke of Berri. It was he, too, who had headed the levies which opposed a feeble resistance to Henry's march to the throne; and he continued to exhibit an attachment to his deposed master, more grateful than prudent, even after Henry had fairly seated himself on the throne. On the imprisonment of Richard, the lords who had appealed Gloucester of treason, entered into a conspiracy for his restoration; but the plot was revealed by the earl of Rutland, to whom they had incautiously communicated their secret, and the conspirators found themselves compelled hastily to raise the standard of rebellion. Having been joined by Lord Lumley, the earls of Kent and Salisbury imprudently took up their quarters in the town of Cirencester, apart from their troops, whom they posted in the adjacent fields. The inhabitants of that town were well affected to Henry, and suddenly invested the quarters of the nobles in the night with a large force. The earls defended themselves for the space of three hours; but were at last obliged to surrender, and conducted as prisoners to the abbey. On the following evening a fire took place in the city, and the populace, supposing that it was designed to draw off their attention from their prisoners, and attempt their rescue, rushed in a body to the place of their confinement, dragged them forth into the street, and instantly beheaded them. Thus fell the earl of Salisbury, Richard's favourite minister, one of the most learned and accomplished nobles of his age, a patron of literature and himself a poet. His poems have unfortunately perished; but, from the testimony of Christina of Pisa, a lady celebrated in the annals of French literature, they appear to have been worthy of his rank and accomplishments. She used to call the earl, "*Gracieux chevalier, aiment dictier, et lui-même gracieux dicteur.*" Walsingham, narrating the circumstances of his death, says, "He who throughout his life had been a favourer of Lollards, a despiser of images, a contemner of the canons, and a derider of sacraments, ended his days, as is reported, without the sacrament of confession."² The earl perhaps enjoyed something more consoling than the sacraments of the church in his last moments. He had always been a steady supporter of the reformed doctrines, had caused the idols and symbols of superstitious worship to be removed from his private chapel, and had never shrunk from the most open and public declaration of his religious sentiments.

¹ Vol. III. p. 277.

² P. 363.

Sir William Walworth.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1380.

THE name of Sir William Walworth, to whose bold heart and ready hand Richard II. probably owed not his crown only but his life, first appears upon record as one of the merchants of London whom the commons appointed treasurers to receive the monies arising from the new aid granted by Richard's first parliament. In the year of Wat Tyler's rebellion, he held the office of mayor of the city, and on the approach of the arch-rebel to Smithfield, at the head of twenty thousand men, he accompanied the young prince while endeavouring to make terms in person with the insurgents. The king's party consisted of only sixty persons, and the Kentish leader, on perceiving their approach, made a sign to his followers to halt, and boldly rode up to the king whom he addressed with his usual confidence. The extravagance of the rebel's demands, prompted by the consciousness of power, and the conciliatory proposals made to him, occasioned some hesitation; and while Richard held a brief consultation with his friends as to what was best to be done in existing circumstances, the Tyler affected to play with his dagger, tossing it from hand to hand, and at last laid his hand on the bridle of the king's horse.¹ The insult, with whatever view it was offered, roused the indignation of the loyal and stout-hearted mayor, who, with a rashness infinitely more dangerous to his sovereign than the Tyler's presumption, sprung forward, and plunged his short sword into the rebel's throat, who, on receiving the wound, spurred his horse, and rode about a dozen yards before he fell to the ground, when he was instantly despatched by Robert Standish one of the king's esquires. The insurgents, who witnessed the transaction, drew their bows, and were about to pour a shower of arrows upon the king's party, when Richard rescued himself and his attendants from their imminent peril, by an act of uncommon bravery and presence of mind. Galloping up to the archers, he exclaimed, "What are ye doing, my lieges? Tyler was a traitor! follow me, I will be your leader." The disconcerted host moved on mechanically at the bidding of their new chief, until they reached the fields at Islington, where Walworth again appeared for the protection of his sovereign, but at the head of an efficient force of one thousand men-at-arms. For these good services, Richard knighted the redoubtable mayor, and bestowed upon him a pension of one hundred pounds per annum.

Sir John Philpot.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1380.

CONTEMPORARY with Sir William Walworth was John Philpot, alderman and citizen of London, whose heroic exploits deserve more ample and frequent commemoration in the pages of our historians than

¹ Knyht, 2637.—Froiss. Ivii—lxii.

they have yet obtained. In the early part of Richard's reign, the French were allowed to land on various parts of the English coast, and commit great devastations on the unprotected towns and villages. Encouraged by his knowledge of the defenceless state of the place, one Mercer, a Scottish adventurer, entered the port of Scarborough, and carried away the merchant vessels that lay there, and soon made himself so formidable on the English coast, that the king and council were petitioned to adopt instant measures for his capture. But the government regarded the application with indifference, and Mercer was allowed to continue his ravages with impunity, until Philpot undertook to do at his own expense and risk what the ministry would not do in the public service. He fitted out some ships, and placing on board of them an armament of one thousand men, boldly sailed in quest of the daring pirate, whom he soon encountered, and, after a smart action, captured with his whole fleet, consisting of the ships which he had taken at Scarborough, and fifteen Spanish vessels laden with spoil. He then sailed triumphantly to London with his prizes, and received an enthusiastic welcome from his brother-citizens and the populace. But the council of regency beheld his success and his reception with a jealous eye; and the earl of Stafford even went so far as to charge this loyal and gallant subject of the crown with the commission of an illegal act, in presuming to levy forces, and pursue war within the king's dominions without the sovereign's permission. But Philpot repelled the unworthy accusation with so much spirit and firmness, that the prosecution was abandoned, and he received an honourable acquittal. "Few memorials," says the fair historian of the wars of York and Lancaster, "remain to perpetuate the remembrance of Philpot's glorious action. A narrow lane in the city of London which bears his name, we are told by Stow, has derived its appellation from the residence of this distinguished ornament of the aldermanic body; but the tongue of fame has not blazoned its origin, and it is daily pronounced without any reminiscence of the hero who so justly deserves the admiration and esteem of all posterity."

Sir Richard Whittington.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1390.

OUR juvenile readers at least would never forgive us were we to pass over in silence so eminent a name as that of Sir Richard Whittington, 'thrice lord-mayor of London,' while enumerating those of a Walworth and a Philpot. That Sir Richard Whittington was really lord-mayor of London for three successive periods, is matter of record, but we are not so satisfactorily informed of the circumstances of his rise and progress to the civic chair, and least of all do we possess any credible monuments from which we can illustrate the life and adventures of his far-famed cat. Sir Richard, at his death, founded a college, on which he bestowed his own name, and from the ordinances of this foundation we learn that he was the son of Sir William Whittington, knight. A descent such as this strips our lord-mayor's history of much of its romantic character, and compels us, unwillingly, to cast discredit upon

'the pretty and useful fable of the cat,' for it can hardly be supposed that a knight's son could be indebted to so humble a coadjutor for his first advancement in the world. It is probable that family influence, or the venality of Richard's court, laid the foundations of Whittington's wealth and honours. In the charter of Whittington college, the members are directed to remember in their prayers for ever, 'Richard II. and Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester, special lords and promoters of the said Richard Whittington.' This circumstance, taken in connexion with some others to be mentioned presently, has suggested to Miss Roberts the following ingenious piece of conjectural biography:—"The family of Whittington was settled in the north of England, that is, in the vicinity of the pit-coal counties and sea-ports. At the date when we may suppose Whittington a boy, the burning of pit-coal in London was esteemed so great a nuisance, that those who ventured to consume the prohibited fuel were rendered punishable under the statute with the penalty of death; and that the actual enforcement of this statute took place, is evinced by the record of the execution of individuals for this offence, still preserved among the archives of the tower of London. But notwithstanding the severity of such a law, and the proof that at one period at least, all its severity was rigorously executed, we come down as low as the year 1419, before which time Whittington had served all his three several mayoralties, without finding that a repeal of the statute had taken place. The importation of pit-coal formed a considerable branch of the commerce of the Thames. 'As early,' says the author of the history of Newcastle, 'as 1421, it appears that it was a trade of great importance, and that a duty of two-pence per chaldron had been imposed upon it for some time.' Now, to account for this professed and public sanction of a trade which was still prohibited by law, it is only needful to advert to that dispensary power which the English crown so notoriously assumed in this and other periods of its early history, and by means of which the operation of the law was arbitrarily suspended, abrogated, or qualified." Miss Roberts proceeds to argue ingeniously enough, that such especial dispensation may have been granted to Sir Richard by 'his special lords and promoters,' and that a monopoly of the London coal trade with Newcastle was the real source of his splendid civic fortunes.¹ As to the story of the-cat, it seems sufficiently safe to the fair historian—whose guidance we have adopted in this article—to follow a distinguished antiquary, in the belief that the story of 'Whittington and his Cat' is no more than a London version of a Persian story mentioned by Sir William Ouseley.

Henry IV.

BORN A. D. 1367.—DIED A. D. 1413.

THE conqueror of Richard ascended the throne amid the acclamations of the people, in the first ardours of a popularity too violent to be otherwise than dangerous. The weak and reckless character of

¹ *Memoirs of York and Lancaster*, vol. i. p. 160.

the late king had excited an indignation little less than universal, and the able and enterprising Bolingbroke availed himself to the utmost of the advantages afforded him by the misgovernment of his predecessor. His title to the crown was indirect, or rather it was entirely superseded by the existence of a superior claim in the person of Mortimer, earl of March, lineally descended from Lionel, the elder brother of Henry's father. In his address to parliament, challenging the crown, after the public declaration of Richard's forfeiture, he blended with his artfully expressed assertion of hereditary succession, an obscure but significant reference to the right of conquest. At his coronation, too, he seems to have intended an allusion to this double claim, by 'the sword of Lancaster,' which was borne naked on his left hand by the earl of Northumberland, and by the holy oil, preserved from the time of Becket, and given—so ran the legend—to that prelate by the Virgin Mary. The meeting of the new parliament afforded no favourable omen; the debate among the peers was stormy; accusations fiercely made, and as fiercely recriminated; the lie given and thrown back; no fewer than forty gauntlets, gages of personal defiance, flung down and taken up. Such were the lordly courtesies which distinguished this memorable sitting. Conspiracies, as might have been anticipated, were soon in agitation, and a formidable attempt was made to surprise Henry at the castle of Windsor. Failing in this *coup-de-main*, the noblemen, who were concerned in the plot, endeavoured to rouse the people of the kingdom to arm for the liberation of Richard; but the popular feeling was, as yet, on the usurper's side, and the insurgents were seized by the municipal authorities, and executed by summary process.¹ This ill-advised and disastrous scheme sealed the fate of the abdicated monarch, and, in the month of January, 1400, his death was announced as having taken place in the castle of Pontefract. Considerable doubt exists concerning the manner of 'his taking off.' It was reported that from the hour in which he was apprized of the execution of his two brothers, who had taken part in the insurrection, he refused all food. This rumour, however, gained small credence, and it was more commonly believed that the abstinence was not voluntary, but forced. Another account gives the details of a more violent murder, and ascribes the death of Richard, after a strenuous defence, to the hand of Sir Piers d'Exton; but if there be no error in the statement of facts connected with the opening of his tomb some years back, this cannot be true, as the skull, where the disabling blow is said to have been struck, was found without sign of injury.²

In the same year, Henry invaded Scotland, but the Scotch army retired before his armament, and he failed to take the castle of Edinburgh. If, however, he obtained no military honours on this occasion, he gained the noble fame, rare in those days, of humanity and maintenance of discipline in war: no ravages, no violations, no fires, nor massacres, marked the line of his march, and protection was uniformly afforded to the quiet and submissive. In the following seasons, however, the old system of foray was resumed by the commanders on either side, until, in September, 1402, the battle of Homildon-hill, fought by the Scots, under Douglas, against the English, under the

¹ Rot. Parl. iv. 18.

² Archæol. vol. vi.

Percies and the earl of March, gave a decided superiority to the latter. In that singular fight, the men-at-arms, on the side of the Southrons, never charged; it was gained by the archers alone. Ordered by Percy to descend into the low ground between two hills, occupied by the hostile divisions, their discharge was so galling as to provoke Douglas and his chivalry to a forward movement, before which they retired, occasionally facing about, and checking the Scottish horse by a close and 'destructive stream of arrows.' Douglas and the bravest of his companions fell in the charge, covered with wounds; and the loss in slain, and in prisoners of rank, was exceedingly heavy.

But these were tame and uninteresting occurrences compared with the events which, in 1403, placed Henry in jeopardy of his throne. In the struggle with Richard, the earl of Northumberland and his son, the gallant Hotspur, had given themselves implicitly to the Lancastrian cause, and it is not improbable that their accession may have been decisive of its success. The king had not been ungrateful: he appears to have lavished honours and possessions on the Percies, and to have invariably treated them with an honourable confidence. Their manifesto, or 'Defiance,' though evidently a laboured document, has less the air of deeply felt grievance, than of previously formed determination to quarrel, and matter of justification subsequently sought.⁴ It is not unlikely that the success of Henry had kindled the ambition of these noblemen, and that the brilliant victory of Homildon-hill gave edge and resolution to their malcontenty. Be this, however, as it may, their measures were skilfully planned; their strategy was prudent and bold; and their tactics, in the battle which ensued, long held victory in suspense. The earl of Northumberland formed an alliance with the Scots and with the Welsh, who were then, under Owen Glendower, struggling for independence. Joined by Douglas and his retainers, Hotspur, at the head of his border veterans, moved, by rapid marches, upon Wales, and on the road formed a junction with his uncle, the earl of Worcester, who had raised a strong division of archers in Cheshire. The crisis was appalling, but Henry's genius and courage were equal to the emergency. With the prince of Wales he hastened towards the north; but on ascertaining the movements of the insurgents, he changed the direction of his columns, and threw himself athwart Percy's line of march at Shrewsbury, which he entered just in time to prevent the entrance of the enemies' advanced guard. The numbers on either side were nearly equal,—the troops of excellent quality,—the commanders of high reputation,—and the stake at once the greatest and the last. The king offered terms of peace; they were refused, and the battle began. The Northumbrians held a strong position, and at the first assault the royal forces recoiled. Eager to take advantage of this success, Percy and Douglas both charged at the same moment on Henry's personal guard. The immediate effect was terrific. The royal standard-bearer was killed, with several knights around the king, who is said to have been himself unhorsed by Douglas. Bravely, however, did the monarch fight, and bravely was he seconded by his gallant son; the first slew, as stated in the records of the time, thirty-six men-at-arms with his own hand; and the second was wounded in

³ Otterb. 237.—Ford. xv. 14.

⁴ Harding apud 'The Hereditary right of the Crown.'

the face. At length Hotspur fell, and his followers gave way. Subsequent insurrections of the same party were easily suppressed, and with the fall of the powerful and ambitious family of Percy, the only formidable opponency to the house of Lancaster disappeared.

Henry's principal political annoyances were now the Cambrian war, kept up by the active and intrepid Glendower, and the hostility of France, whose generals made frequent inroads on the continental dependencies of the English crown, and landed with flying corps in various parts of England and Wales. These insults at length roused the anger of the king, and, in 1412, an English army landed in Normandy; but, after some negotiation, retired to Guienne.⁵ But there were other sources of deeper vexation than any that could arise from exterior circumstances, which pressed heavily upon Henry's feelings towards the close of his reign. It was not long after his successes against the Northumberland party, that he became afflicted with an eruptive disease, described as a 'detestable leprosy,' and confining its visitations to the face. In addition to this troublesome, and probably painful affection, he was subject to epileptic attacks; and these manifestations of constitutional disorder gave him, to early as in his forty-sixth year, the aspect and infirmities of premature old age. His mind, however, preserved its elasticity, and he retained to the last his firm grasp of the sceptre, although there are appearances of unsettled purpose, and labouring conscience, in the closing scenes of his existence. The final summons found him on his knees before the shrine of St Edward, in Westminster abbey. He was conveyed to the abbot's chamber, and breathed his last, March, 20th, 1413, in the fourteenth year of his reign.

The general character of this brave and politic chief may be inferred from the intimations already given; but there is one prominent feature of his administration—the systematic persecution of every religious opinion, that might offer menace to the usurpations of Rome—which has not yet been noticed, but which demands the severest reprobation, as disgraceful to his memory, and requires examination, on account of its marked deviation from the usual liberality of his government. The princes of the house of Lancaster, mainly, it is probable, through consciousness of defect in their title to the crown, affected an unusual regard to popular rights; and instances might be given, of concession, both verbal and practical, very much at issue with the then fashionable notions concerning the origin and extent of kingly power. Yet, in contravention of this sagacious and successful policy, Henry is found eager and sanguinary in the endeavour to suppress sentiments, of which the circulation had been aided, directly by his father's policy, indirectly by his own. The preaching of the fearless and enlightened Wickliffe had not been in vain; it had awakened a spirit of inquiry and a temper of opposition, which halts and faggots may partially restrain, but must fail in the effort to extinguish. It may be admitted that Henry had powerful motives for complaisance toward the hierarchy. A defective title, and an imperfect hold upon the attachment of the nobles, were in themselves enough to stimulate the restless vigilance of an usurper, and to call forth the utmost energies of a determined and

⁵ Monstrelet.

unscrupulous ruler; nor would it have been less than political insanity, to have neglected any fair means of conciliating the priesthood, whose support to the cause of the malcontents might have turned the scale. But there was a safe and honourable medium: his own convictions were probably in opposition to the new doctrines, and, politically speaking, he could not have been blamed for the fair exercise of his influence, in behalf of the dominant system; beyond this he could not go, without deeply offending those to whom it behoved him to be most cautious of giving offence—the people of England, of whom the larger and better portion were, if not adverse to Romanism, abhorrent of blood. Unmoved, however, by these considerations, and preferring violence to discretion, he enforced extreme measures, and obtained for them the sanction of a parliamentary enactment. The statute *de Heretico comburendo* was passed early in his reign,⁶ and it was not suffered to remain a dead letter. William Sautre, priest of St Osyth's, London, was the first victim to this detestable abuse of legislation.⁷ It is somewhat difficult to account for the subserviency of parliament in this matter, since the house of commons at least, appears to have been disposed to treat the sacerdocy with very slight ceremony. The speaker was instructed, in one instance, to make urgent remonstrances against the immunity from regular taxation enjoyed by the hierarchy; but the peers supported the ecclesiastics, and the archbishop of Canterbury assumed a high tone on the occasion. "If I live," said that prelate, addressing the speaker, "thou shalt have hot taking away any thing that I have."⁸ The primate, Arundel, was proud and pitiless, and it was probably at his instigation, that measures of such outrageous severity were adopted. It may be farther suggested, in extenuation of conduct which does not admit of direct defence, that Henry with all his shrewdness and energy, seems never to have succeeded in establishing a government intrinsically strong. His foreign policy appears to have been feeble and wavering; and there are indications which may justify the suspicion that his civil administration was, from whatever cause, not always equal to the exigences of the time.

In his reign, however, the immunities and authority of the commons house of parliament assumed a consistency and independence, which began to give a new character to the government of England. The constitution of the house was essentially improved, by provisions for the freedom of elections, and by an important abridgment of the frequently abused power of the sheriff. An unceasing jealousy was manifested towards all attempts to restrain the liberty of debate, and the then necessarily extensive privilege of security from arrest was firmly maintained. The same determination was exhibited in the dispute concerning the registration of parliamentary proceedings, which had been heretofore effected always negligently, and sometimes abusively. Henry resisted their requisition of a fair and equitable process of verification, but they persisted until the concession was made. They were, moreover, sternly vigilant over the fiscal measures of the court; and their conduct, altogether, illustrates the steady progress that Englishmen were making, in the knowledge and maintenance of their political rights.

⁶ Rot. Parl. III. 466.

⁷ Ib.

⁸ Hollinshed.

Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March.

DIED A. D. 1425.

THE house of Lancaster, in the person of Henry, had now reached the summit of its ambition ; but there existed—as we have already hinted—a formidable competitor, whose claims rested on the principle of hereditary succession. Had this principle been allowed to regulate the high transactions of state, on the deposition of Richard, the crown would have devolved on the posterity of Lionel, duke of Clarence, the second son of Edward III. By the decease of that prince without male issue, his rights fell to his daughter, Philippa, who had married Roger Mortimer, earl of March, the male representative of the powerful baron who was attainted and executed for the murder of Edward II. The forfeited earldom had been regained by Roger's son, who, in the 26th of Edward III., obtained a reversal of the judgment against his parent, and thenceforth bore the title of earl of March. His son and successor, Edmund, worthily supported his high rank, by his splendid services in France and Ireland ; and, by his marriage with Philippa of Clarence, transmitted the rightful claim to the crown of England to his descendants. Roger Mortimer, the fourth in descent from the regicide, succeeded his father in the government of Ireland. He was a knight of great personal accomplishments, and celebrated for the magnificence of his household, and the reckless gaiety of his life. In a combat with the sept of O'Brien, his headlong valour distanced his followers, and, fighting in the disguise of an Irish horseman, he was overpowered by numbers, and torn to pieces by his savage enemies, ere his friends could come up to his rescue. The helpless heir, Edmund Mortimer, was at this time only an infant of ten years of age, and was instantly given by Henry of Lancaster in ward to his son, the prince of Wales, who placed him in Windsor castle, where, though strictly guarded, he seems to have been treated in a courteous and indulgent manner. It does not appear that Edmund inherited either the restlessness and ambition which characterized some of his ancestors, or the martial gallantry which blazed forth in others ; but his existence was often used as an apology, by more ambitious spirits, for their own factious proceedings ; and might, but for his own want of enterprize, have seriously incommoded the councils of regency, during the minority of Henry VI. His appointment to the command of Ireland, on the accession of the young king, was a piece of dexterous policy. While it gratified that love of show and magnificence which seemed to be his only master passion, it removed him from intercourse with those men and measures which might have roused some latent spark of ambition in the breast of one, the heir of so many dangerous pretensions. His death, which took place in the third year of Henry VI., seemed to secure the permanent establishment of the Lancastrian family upon the throne.

Owen Glendower.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1349.—DIED A. D. 1415.

OWEN GLENDOWER,¹ whose noble resistance of the English arms amid the declining fortunes of his native country has obtained for him the appellation of the Wallace of Wales, was born, as is commonly supposed, in the year 1349. Historians have agreed on the minute date of the day of the year—which they all concur in fixing on the 28th of May—but there exists a wide discrepancy amongst them in the more important article of the year itself which ushered this hero into the world: Lewis Owen says 1349, whilst other annalists determine it to have been 1354. Trefgarn, in Pembrokeshire, was the place of his birth. His father was Gryffyd Vyehan; by the mother's side he was lineally descended from Llewellyn, the last prince of Wales. The birth of our hero was not without its portents, 'to mark him extraordinary.' Holinshed relates that his father's horses were found that night standing in the stables up to their girths in blood, and the traditionary legends of Wales abound in equally marvellous stories concerning so important an event.² The young Owen received a liberal education, according to the estimate of the age. He is represented as having started in life in the profession of a pleader in the inns of Court; but afterwards relinquishing his profession, he received the appointment of esquire in the household of Richard II., and adhered to that unfortunate prince till his surrender of the crown had released all his followers from their obligations to his person.

During the reign of Richard, Owen had been engaged in a dispute about the boundaries of his lordship of Glendowrdrdy with Reginald, Lord Grey de Ruthyn, an Anglo-Norman, whose seignories lay immediately adjoining; and had recovered at law a piece of ground which lay betwixt the two properties. But Reginald, upon the accession of Henry IV., again resumed possession of the disputed territory, whilst Owen appealed in vain for redress to the first parliament of the new monarch.³ Disappointed in his suit in this quarter, he resolved to enforce his claims at his own hand. In the summer of 1400, he attacked the castle of his rival, and laid waste his barony. Here the affair might have terminated, had not the king, taking the cause into his own hands, ordered Lords Talbot and Grey to march against him, and surround him in his own house. Upon their approach, Glendower retired into the inaccessible fastnesses of Snowdon, where he successfully maintained a guerilla warfare against the English forces. Stimulated by a sense of national degradation, and the recollection of the haughty Edward's conduct towards their country, and encouraged, perhaps, by the vague prophecies of Merlin and Aquila which wandering minstrels sung throughout the country, thousands of his countrymen flocked to his standard, and, on the 20th of September, Glen-

¹ In the 'Collection of the Public Acts,' he is always called Glendourdy.

² Shakspeare has availed himself of these supernatural omens in Henry IV.

"At my nativity
The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes,
Of burning cressets," &c.

³ Walsing. p. 361.

dower, finding himself already at the head of a powerful and spirited army, proclaimed himself Prince of Wales. The defeat of the Flemings of Pembroke and Cardiganshire, who had been surrounded with a greatly superior force on Mynydd Hyddgant, was followed by the capture of Lord Grey, who obtained his sovereign's license to purchase his liberty by acceptance of the terms of ransom proposed by Glendower. These were of such a kind as neutralized the future efforts of his prisoner. Besides payment of 10,000 marks, the proud baron was compelled to accept of the hand of Jane, his rival's daughter, in marriage. Henry now published a general amnesty, with no other exceptions than Owen of Glendowrdy, Rice ap Tudor, and William ap Tudor.⁴ But the Welsh continued to pour into the camp of their countryman from all quarters, and even the Welsh students at Oxford and Cambridge hastened to join the national cause. The revolt had now assumed too serious an aspect for ordinary measures. In the month of October 1401, Henry placed himself at the head of an army and set out in person to chastise the presumptuous rebel;⁵ but the activity of Owen, aided by an uncommonly severe winter, rendered all his efforts abortive, and a dishonourable retreat followed. The Percies now rebelled, and the irregular and wild Glendower joined that formidable coalition, which we have treated of under another head. His next step was to assemble the estates of the principality at Machynlaeth in Montgomeryshire, by whom he was formally crowned sovereign of Wales.

Henry was successful in preventing the junction of the Northumbrian and Welsh forces, but Owen maintained with unabated spirit the independence of his country; and, in 1404, concluded a treaty of alliance with Charles, King of France, in which he styled himself, "*Owemus Dei Gratia Princeps Walliæ*,"⁶ &c. The king of England now entrusted the recovery of Wales to his gallant son, Henry of Monmouth, whom he created lord-lieutenant of that country, with special powers, for the better execution of his commission.⁷ Owen commenced the campaign of 1405 by taking some castles, and defeating the earl of Warwick at Mynydd Cwmdy in Montgomeryshire; but the young Henry soon after successively defeated Owen himself at Grosmount, and his son at Mynydd-y-Pwli-Melyn.

Owen was now compelled to seek an asylum in the most inaccessible spots of Wales. A diversion was made in his favour by a French armament, but its success was only temporary, and Prince Henry gradually got possession of the strongest fortresses of the country. Still he seems to have struggled on with unconquerable spirit though diminished fortunes. In 1411, we find him specially excepted from the general pardon issued by Henry, as an arch-rebel with whom his enemies dared not to negotiate.⁸ In the ensuing year, David Gam, an apostate Welshman, who had been seized in an attempt to assassinate Glendower, though his own brother-in-law, obtained license to purchase his liberty by payment of a ransom to the unconquered chief. Three months before the battle of Agincourt, Henry V. commissioned Sir Gilbert Talbot to treat with Glendower, and the offer was again renewed after that victory had graced the English arms; but, during the negotiation,

⁴ Rymer's *Fœd.* viii. 181.

⁵ Rymer's *Fœd.* viii. 356.

⁷ *Ib.* viii. 291.

⁸ Walsing. 364.

^{*} Rymer's *Fœd.* viii. 711.

death overtook this last king of the Britons, who expired on the 20th of September, 1415. His countrymen seem to have forgotten the memory of their intrepid defender sooner than his enemies themselves. In the year 1431, the English commons besought the lords to enforce the forfeiture of Owen Glendower's lands, whom they describe as an arch-traitor, whose success would have been "to the destruction of all English tongue for evermore."⁹

Sir William Gascoigne.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1350.—DIED A. D. 1413.

SIR WILLIAM GASCOIGNE, chief-justice of the king's bench in the reign of Henry IV., was born at Gawthorp, in Yorkshire, about the year 1350. His family was noble, and of Norman extraction. Having studied law, and acquired considerable reputation as a pleader, he was appointed one of the king's sergeants-at-law in 1398. Upon the accession of Henry IV., he was made judge in the court of common pleas; and, in 1401, was elevated to the chief-justiceship of the king's bench. In July, 1403, he was joined in the commission with Ralph Neville, earl of Westmoreland, for levying forces in Yorkshire and Northumberland against the insurrection of Henry Percy; and, on the submission of that nobleman, he was nominated in the commission to treat with the rebels. In all these high trusts, Gascoigne acquitted himself to the satisfaction of his royal master and the kingdom at large. But on the apprehension of Archbishop Scroop, when the king required his chief-justice to pass sentence of death upon him as a traitor, the virtuous and inflexible Gascoigne sternly refused, because the laws which he was appointed to administer gave him no jurisdiction over the life of an ecclesiastic. Henry was highly displeased at the obstinacy, but had sufficient strength of mind to respect the integrity of his minister, and Gascoigne had the honour of knighthood conferred on him the same year.

From his general conduct, as related by historians, there is sufficient reason to place Sir William Gascoigne in the first rank of chief-justices, both for integrity and abilities. The many abstracts of his opinions, arguments, and decisions, which occur in our older law-reports, sufficiently attest the general opinion which was entertained of his professional merits. One memorable transaction, which still remains upon record, would have sufficed, had others equally strong been wanting, to have stamped his character for ever with the noble feature of judicial independence. It happened that one of the associates of the youthful, and then dissolute prince of Wales, had been arraigned for felony. The news of his favourite's apprehension no sooner reached the prince's ears, than he hastened to the court, and imperiously demanded that the prisoner should be immediately set at liberty. Gascoigne desired him instantly to withdraw, and leave the law to take its course; whereupon the prince, breaking through all restraint and decorum, rushed furiously up to the bench, and, as is generally affirmed, struck the chief-justice.

⁹ Rot. Parl. iv. 377.—Hen. VI.

On this, Sir William coolly ordered his assailant to be taken into custody, and after administering a sharp reproof to him in the hearing of the court, ordered him into confinement in the prison of the king's bench. The young prince had the good sense to submit calmly to the punishment which he had so justly merited; and, when the matter was related to his father, it is recorded to his honour also, that, instead of manifesting any displeasure towards the chief-justice, he thanked God for having given him 'both a judge who knew how to administer the laws, and a son who respected their authority.' Gascoigne was called to the parliament which met in the first year of Henry V., but died before the expiration of the year, on the 17th of December, 1413. He was twice married, and left a numerous train of descendants by both his wives.

Henry V.

BORN A. D. 1388.—DIED A. D. 1422.

THE younger days of this gallant and splendid sovereign were, as is of common knowledge, remarkable for eccentricity and licentiousness; it is less notorious that the season of wild excess was darkened by acts, or at least by machinations, of far deeper criminality. Shakspeare has made us all familiar with the rough gaieties and unprincipled associations amid which Falstaff's 'mad compound of majesty' wasted the rich hours of youth, and cast away the 'golden opinions' of the wise and good; but, in his immortal scenes, the redeeming brightness of an ingenuous spirit breaks through the shadows that a restless and inconsiderate temper had thrown over the promise of clear intellect and generous feelings. History insinuates, rather than reveals, a tale of less extenuable guilt. It tells, indeed, of that impetuous but noble disposition, which, when it had violated the sanctuary and insulted the administrator of justice, could so well atone, by yielding dignified obedience to the sentence that avenged its questioned supremacy. It tells, beside, of more doubtful transactions; when dark rumours and fearful intimations had reached the ears of the reigning king, of insolent speeches betraying unhallowed designs; and when, clad in fantastic attire of silk and gold, and followed by a numerous train, the half-petulant, half-penitent aspirant, fell at his father's feet, and proffered life as the pledge of sincerity.¹ But this is not all: there are still in existence, documents which impute to the prince a deliberately formed purpose to dethrone the king, and affirm the fact, that in open parliament the latter was required by his son to resign the crown, which disease prevented him from wearing with dignity and efficiency. It is farther stated, that when this insolent and unfilial requisition was at once rejected, the younger Henry withdrew in fierce anger, and forthwith engaged in measures intended ultimately to force from his father's weakened grasp the sceptre which, however gained, had been wielded with signal ability. The death of the king prevented the consumma-

¹ Stow, 339.

tion of this treason, and gave to the craving heir an innocent and undisputed possession.²

Few sovereigns have ascended the throne more eminently endowed with mental and personal advantages than was Henry of Monmouth. In prime of manhood, graceful in person and manner, singularly vigorous and active, he obtained the favour of the commonalty by his fair exterior and courteous deportment. Of distinguished talents, well-cultivated by education, and called into exercise by early experience both in counsel and action, he commanded the admiration and obedience of those whose rank or whose sagacity gave them influence.

When his father was sent into banishment, Henry was a mere boy, and in his twelfth year made his first campaign in the Irish expedition of Richard II., who had taken him under his care, and on that occasion gave him knighthood with his own hand. When his father landed in England on the enterprise which gave him a kingdom, Henry disarmed, by his shrewdness and presence of mind, the anger of Richard, which was rising to his danger. The elder Henry seems to have been anxious that his son should be well-instructed in the art of war. He had a command under his father in the Scottish and Welsh campaigns, and in the desperate conflict which, at Shrewsbury, crushed the rebellion of the Percies, the prince distinguished himself alike as an officer and a soldier. When only sixteen, he had assigned to him the arduous task of subjugating Wales, and in all that he undertook he exhibited high courage and skilful conduct. The excesses which, in the words of Elmham, 'clouded as with the black smoke of misdoing,' the brightness of his rising, were thrown aside when, at the early age of twenty-five, he assumed the crown. His father's death seemed to have awakened in him the dormant elements of his nobler nature: he lamented his filial errors,—discarded his dissolute companions,—and took to his counsels the men who had rebuked and withstood him in the season of his extravagance. He gave freedom to the earl of March, whose lineal claim to the crown had induced the former king to detain him, if not in absolute captivity, at least in strict observance,—he restored the exiled son of 'Harry Percy' to his rank and possessions,—and when the remains of Richard received, at his command, a royal burial in Westminster abbey, he led, as chief mourner, the funeral procession.³

The first decided trial of Henry's character as statesman and warrior, is exhibited in the affair of the Lollards. Of those *heretics*, Dr Lingard, the advocate of Romanism, gives an unfavourable representation, as the abettors of a wild and injurious theology, and as men quite prepared to engage in active and thorough-going rebellion. This is mere exaggeration. It may be difficult to extract from the chroniclers of the olden time, a clear and unbiassed explanation of facts and circumstances; but a fair and temperate investigation would certainly bring out a more exculpatory result. It is probable that the persecuting policy of the house of Lancaster might produce exasperation, but the

² It should be mentioned, that the sole authority for this statement appears to be an unpublished writing, ascribed to the contemporary historian Walsingham, extant among the Sloane MSS., and first cited by Sharon Turner. It is worthy of observation, that of the prince's requisition, though apparently made with all formality, no trace is to be found in the rolls of parliament.

³ Walsing. 335.—Otterb. 274.

design against the king's person,—its failure through his removal from Eltham,—and the consequent armed assemblage in St Giles's fields,—are, if not altogether apocryphal, liable to reasonable suspicion, as excessively overcharged by party feeling. Henry was a persecutor: he gave up his companion, Sir John Oldcastle, to the tender mercies of an ecclesiastical tribunal; and he adopted, in its full extent, the system of deference practised by his father towards the hierarchy. He appears, indeed, to have been characterised by a stern and inflexible severity. His hasty order for the massacre of the prisoners at Azincour, may be defended on the ground of necessity; but his insensibility to human suffering is proved by his conduct at the siege of Rouen, when he suffered twelve thousand non-combatants—men, women, and children—to perish between his camp and the walls, rather than depart from his refusal to allow them a passage through his lines.

From the very outset of his kingly career, Henry's mind seems to have been fixed on foreign conquest, and his aim was nothing less than the sovereignty of France. That kingdom was miserably vexed by the feuds of its powerful lords: the war between the respective parties of the Dauphin and the duke of Burgundy, shook the foundations of the state; and hence, in the creed of conquerors, it presented to ambition a legitimate field, a fair arena, on which armies might contend for the mastery, while a suffering nation paid the heavy cost both of victory and defeat. Henry negotiated until his preparations were complete, and in August, 1415, landed in Normandy, after having been delayed at Southampton by the detection and punishment of a treasonable conspiracy, in which his cousin, the earl of Cambridge, and Lord Scroop, his favoured intimate, were desperately and unaccountably concerned. Six thousand men-at-arms and twenty-four thousand archers were marshalled on the shores of France, and immediately invested Harfleur, which yielded after a gallant defence. Henry was thus furnished with a strongly fortified place of arms, but it had cost him dear; half, at least, of his numbers had either fallen in the operations of the siege, or perished by disease. Shorn of its strength, the army was now altogether unequal to decisive operations; yet, although prudence clearly dictated the expediency of postponing farther movements until strongly reinforced, the king, on some strange ground of punctilious intrepidity, determined on forcing his way over the hostile ground that lay between him and Calais. From this moment the campaign becomes an object of the highest interest. The constable of France, Charles d'Albret, though far from a first-rate commander, seems to have acted under sound advice. Aware of the faults which had led to the discomfiture of Cressy and Poitiers, he adopted a cautious and defensive policy, fully resolved not to fight except on such vantage-ground and with such favourable odds of number, as to make victory certain. Strong corps of partizans hung upon the march of the English, pressing on their flanks and rear, wasting the country around, and occupying every defensible post, while the main army of the French held, in overpowering force, the right bank of the Somme. Leaving out of consideration the primary error—the mal-apropos entertainment of the point of honour—nothing could be more ably conducted than the movements and manœuvres of Henry. Finding the fords of the Somme palisaded and strongly guarded, he determined on turning it

by its sources, and for that purpose moved off by his right, at the same time seizing every opportunity of attempting to find or force a passage. Happily the negligence of the garrison of St Quentin saved him eight days of disastrous march, amid privations of all kinds, and with soldiers debilitated, though not disheartened, by disease. He lost no time in pushing his army across the river, and establishing it on the opposite bank; six days afterwards the battle of Azincour was fought. It was on the 25th of October that this memorable conflict took place, to the immortal honour of the English sovereign as a warrior and general; whether to the equal credit of his prudence and humanity, is a point less easily ascertained. Nothing could exceed the ability of Henry's arrangements: the strength of his position was essentially defensive, but he showed himself fully prepared for the more vigorous alternative when demanded by circumstances. The French fought stoutly, but their masses were ill handled, and the terrific discharge of the English archery kept the men-at-arms from closing. Still with such energy and perseverance did the French soldiery attack, that the British line was at first borne back a spear's length, and it was only by dint of hard fighting that the ground could be recovered. At last, however, the unwieldy and closely-pressed masses of the constable's divisions, assailed in front, turned on their flanks, and menaced in rear, became an intimidated and ungovernable mob, which the English, with bill, sword, lance, and club, butchered without resistance. The victory was gained, 1. Through Henry's admirable choice and skilful occupation of his ground; 2. By his prompt seizure of the critical moment for changing his system of defence into a bold and vigorous offensive; 3. By the error of the constable in allowing himself to engage on ground where his divisions were hampered by their own numbers; 4. By the terrible ferocity with which the English soldiers fought. The king was in the greatest personal danger: once was he struck to the ground by the blow of a mace, and a stroke from the duke of Alençon's sword cleaved the crown which encircled his helmet. Sixteen hundred of the victors fell, including the earl of Suffolk and the duke of York.* Other authorities greatly reduce the numbers reported as slain. "They," (the French,) says an old writer, "had, according to their own reckoning, more than sixty thousand that drew the sword, when our fighting men did not exceed six thousand; and out of their numbers fell the dukes of Brabant, Barre, and Alençon, five earls, upwards of ninety barons and standard-bearers, whose names are written in the book of records; and more than one thousand five hundred knights, according to their own computation, and between four and five thousand other nobles, being nearly all the nobility of the French knighthood. And there were taken of the remaining number, the dukes of Orleans and Bourbon; the earls of Richemund, de Vendosme, and de Jefe; also the most mighty soldier, Lord Buçicald, marshal of France, and but few other noblemen."⁵ The glory of this splendid victory was clouded by an act of barbarity to which allusion has been already made. A band of marauders, while the fight was at the hottest, sacked a village in the English rear, where all the baggage had been lodged. The king, apprized

* Monstrelet.

⁵ Sloane MS.

of the fact, but not aware of its real nature, ordered, under the impression that it was a regular assault by a numerous division, all his prisoners to be put to the sword. To us of the present day, when milder maxims prevail in war, this act appears little better than an atrocious massacre, but by contemporaries, it was considered as a resolution severe, indeed, but justified by the emergency; and so completely was it regarded in this light by the French themselves, that they punished the individuals whose plundering expedition had occasioned the slaughter, as having driven Henry to so fatal a necessity.

The victory was not followed up. Henry returned to England with his booty, and during nearly two years abstained from farther aggression. At length, however, he was tempted to another effort by the miserable condition to which France was reduced through the struggle for power between the factions of the dauphin and the duke of Burgundy. After much negotiation, and a disgusting exhibition of selfish and faithless character, the leading parties consented to a compromise of their respective claims, and agreed to a union of their forces against the formidable invader who now stood upon the soil of France at the separate invitation of them both. Indignant at this foul play, and resolute to take revenge for the intrigue of which he had been the dupe, Henry, having already made himself master of Normandy, advanced towards the capital, and having seized Pontoise, paused awhile to watch the course of events, which was speedily turned in his favour by an act of the darkest treachery. The dastardly and impolitic assassination of the duke of Burgundy under the eye of the dauphin, threw the whole Burgundian party into the arms of Henry. The regency,—the succession to the crown,—the hand of the princess of France,—were all pledged to him; and in the winter of 1420, he entered Paris in triumph, where his claims were acknowledged and the treaty ratified by the three estates of the realm. Early in 1421, he returned to England, and his progress from the coast to his capital was an uninterrupted triumphal procession, terminated by the splendid coronation of his beautiful queen. A partial defeat of his troops in Anjou, which cost him the life of his brother, the duke of Clarence, recalled him to France at the head of a formidable reinforcement. This success had been gained chiefly by the Scottish auxiliaries of the dauphin, and Henry gave fresh proof of a fierce and vindictive temper, by hanging every Scot taken in arms during the operations which ensued. He now surrounded himself with regal magnificence, and exercised the functions of regent without challenge or control; but in the midst of his victorious exultation, a mightier arm had smitten him; a secret disease was sapping his constitutional vigour, and in the full career of conquest he was met by the stern arrest of the 'fell sergeant.' He exhibited in the last moments of existence all the firmness of his character, received the viaticum with devotion, and affirmed that it had been his intention to undertake a crusade for the recovery of Jerusalem, after he should have completed the subjugation of France. He died August 31, 1422, leaving his infant son under the guardianship of the earl of Warwick, and the government of England and France to his brothers, the dukes of Bedford and Gloucester.

Henry died almost in the very flush and spring-tide of his youth, and the consequent brevity of his reign, with the military events which

gave it a distinguishing character, made his domestic government comparatively insignificant; yet it may be observed, in general, that he was not unreluctant to gratify his faithful commons—the source of the liberal supplies which enabled him to achieve his foreign conquests—by conceding and confirming their claim to an equal share in the legislation of the kingdom.

Lord Cobham.

DIED A. D. 1417.

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE, sometimes called ‘the good Lord Cobham,’ was born in the reign of Edward III. He obtained his peerage, by marrying the heiress of that Lord Cobham who, with so much virtue and patriotism, opposed the tyrannical measures of Richard II. In early life, he became a zealous supporter of the Wickliffites, and besides expending large sums in the transcription and circulation of that reformer’s writings, he maintained a number of his disciples as itinerant preachers in various parts of the country. Not contented with the revival of the famous statute against provisors, Lord Cobham, in conjunction with Sir Richard Story, Sir Thomas Latimer, and others of the reforming party, prepared a series of articles against the abuses then prevalent among churchmen, which they presented in the form of a remonstrance to the commons. These measures drew upon him the indignation of the whole ecclesiastical order throughout England; and various attempts were made to crush him and his coadjutors before their party had gathered sufficient strength to defend itself. On the accession of Henry IV., Lord Cobham was invited to court, and soon after received the joint command, with the earl of Arundel, of the armament which Henry sent to the aid of the duke of Burgundy. It would appear, from his acceptance of this commission, that the disciple had not yet entirely reconciled himself to the peaceable task of his master. Perhaps—as Gilpin observes—like other casuists, he indulged a favourite point, and found arguments to make that indulgence lawful.

One of the first measures which Arundel prevailed on Henry V. to adopt, was the appointment of a commission to inquire into the growth of heresy at Oxford. Oxford was the chief seat of the new and pestilential heresy. Here Wickliff had laboured, and here the learning, the eloquence, the labours, and the unshrinking fortitude of the apostolic man were yet the objects of admiration. The commissioners fulfilled their task, and reported that the new heresy still continued to spread and fester among the students, and that this was mainly owing to the example and patronage of the Lord Cobham, who not only avowedly held heretical opinions himself, but encouraged scholars, by bountiful stipends, to propagate these opinions throughout the country. The convocation hereupon determined to enforce the penalties of the law against the noble heretic; but the king, unwilling to sacrifice his faithful servant and friend, undertook the task himself of prevailing on him to retract his errors. Lord Cobham’s answer to the speech in which Henry endeavoured to convince him of his errors and high offence in separating from the church, is upon record: “I ever was,” said he,

"and I hope ever will be, a dutiful subject to your majesty. Next to the obedience which I owe to God, is that which I profess to my king. But as for the spiritual dominion of the pope, I never could see on what foundation it rested, neither can I pay him any obedience. As sure as the word of God is true, to me it seems evident, that the pope is the great antichrist foretold in holy writ." Baffled in the attempt to convince his heretical subject of his errors, the king allowed the archbishop to pursue his own measures; and accordingly Cobham was cited to appear before the ecclesiastical tribunal on a fixed day, and, failing to appear, was pronounced contumacious, and solemnly excommunicated.

The next step, Cobham foresaw, would prove fatal to him, unless he could interest the king in his favour. With this view, he put in writing a confession of his faith, and, waiting upon the king, placed it in his hands, entreating him to consider the whole case, and to judge for himself in the matter. The king received the document, but coldly ordered it to be given to the archbishop. Cobham then offered to adduce one hundred knights who would bear testimony to the innocence of his life and opinions; but the king still continued silent. At this instant, a person entered the audience-chamber, and, in the king's presence, cited Cobham to appear before the archbishop, and he was immediately hurried to the tower. On being brought before the primate the first time, he was offered absolution and remission of past offences, on his expressing his regret and penitence; but this he sternly declined doing. At his second examination, he was asked, whether, in the sacrament of the supper, after the words of consecration, there remained any material bread? To which he replied: "My belief is, that Christ's body is contained under the form of bread." He was next asked, whether he thought confession to a priest of absolute necessity? To which he replied, that he thought it might be, in many cases, useful to ask the opinion of a priest, if he were a learned and pious man; but he considered it by no means necessary to salvation. Being questioned about the pope's right to St Peter's chair, he answered: "He that followeth Peter the highest in holy living, is next him in succession." And being pressed to say what he thought of the pope, he boldly replied: "That he and you together make whole the great antichrist; he is the head, you bishops and priests the body, and the begging friars are the tail." He was finally asked, what he thought of the worship of images and holy relics? "I pay them no manner of regard," was the undaunted reply. The archbishop then observed that he found lenity was thrown away upon the prisoner, but again offered him the alternative to submit to the church, or abide the consequences. "My faith is fixed," replied his lordship, "do with me what you please." Whereupon the archbishop, standing up, and taking off his cap, pronounced aloud the censure of the church: but some months were allowed to elapse, without proceeding to extremities against the prisoner.

In the meantime his lordship effected his escape from the tower, and hastened into Wales, where, under the protection of some of the chiefs of that country, he defied the pursuit of his enemies. A miserable attempt has been made by some popish writers, to represent Lord Cobham as soon afterwards appearing in St Giles's fields, at the head of a body of rebels, amounting to twenty thousand men. It is indeed true, that the church party succeeded in convincing the king that

Cobham was extensively engaged in treasonable practices, and a price was in consequence set upon his head ; but the whole affair, and especially the Giles's fields conspiracy, was a pure invention of his lordship's enemies, as Fox has most satisfactorily proved, in his ' Defence of Lord Cobham against Alanus Copus.'¹ In a parliament, held at Leicester a few months after, a bill was brought in, declaring that heresy should incur the forfeitures of treason, and that those who had broken prison, after having been convicted of heresy, should be liable in the full penalties, unless they rendered themselves again,—a clause too evidently aimed at Cobham, to require comment from us. For a period of four years, Lord Cobham remained an exile in Wales, shifting frequently the scene of his retreat. At last he was betrayed by Lord Powis, and conducted to London, where, with every instance of barbarous insult, he suffered death in St Giles's fields.

Henry VI.

BORN A. D. 1421.—DIED A. D. 1471.

AT the accession of this prince, the conjuncture was ominous of disaster to England. Henry of Azincour, by his victories and negotiations, had placed the nation on an eminence at once so lofty and so hazardous, as to require, perhaps, even more than his own energy and skill for its firm holding ; yet this doubtful elevation was now to be maintained by a power of which the elements were, an infant king, a wrangling regency, and a people among whom the feelings of partizanship had not as yet had time to wear out. That section of history which includes the effort to clear away the rubbish of ancient prejudices, and the wreck of barbarous institutions, was, with respect to the English people, still in progress. It had never occurred to them that the mere quarrel of dynasties could not, in any way, concern the state ; nor that the particular strife between the families of York and Lancaster, presented no prospect in the triumph of either party, of the smallest compensation for the miseries of civil war. Hence, they were ever ready, like soldiers of fortune, to peril their lives in the cause of any popular chieftain, who might, under whatever pretext of injury or right, raise the standard of revolt. A strong arm, and determined resolution, combined in a single ruler, might have contracted this turbulent spirit, or given it vent in foreign enterprize ; but the council of regency was a divided body ; and the seasonable interposition of parliament seems to have been absolutely necessary to prevent an actual warfare between Cardinal Beaufort and the duke of Gloucester ; the former, a son of John of Gaunt ; the latter, brother to the late king ; and both of them leading members of the administration. The prelate seems to have been a man greedy of gain, yet making his avarice subservient to his policy ; ambition was another of his besetting sins ; and in his advance towards his object, he did not permit scruples

¹ We are not surprised to find the hasty, inaccurate, and prejudiced Hume, carelessly following the authority of Walsingham—a mere bigot—upon this point ; but it does surprise us to find the Giles's fields conspiracy treated with all the gravity of authentic history by such a man as Dr Lingard. See his 3d vol. p. 336.

of conscience to interpose with any obvious effect. The character of the duke presents a harder problem for solution. He was accomplished and popular; but in more substantial qualities he appears to have been deficient. Immorality, inconsistency, and miserable selfishness, mark his conduct, as recorded in history. He outraged public decency in his successive marriages to Jacqueline of Hainault, and Eleanor Cobham, while he sacrificed the interests of his country in favour of his own absurd claims to the sovereignty of Holland. His elder brother, the duke of Bedford, held the high and hazardous office of regent of France, and his efforts to maintain and extend his authority were continually thwarted by the waywardness of Gloucester.

This state of things was favourable to what may be termed the national, in opposition to the Anglo-Burgundian party in France, and the commanders of the French troops were not slow to take advantage of the crisis. Their first effort had for its object the capture of Crevant, a fortress of importance on the river Yonne, and the siege was formed by a division of French soldiers, aided by three thousand Scottish auxiliaries, the whole under the command of the earl of Buchan, constable of Scotland. Four thousand Englishmen-at-arms, led by the earl of Salisbury, marched for the relief of the town, and a fierce battle was fought, which ended in the defeat of the allies, and the capture of their commander. The chief loss fell on the Scots, who bore the brunt of the conflict, and to whom little quarter was given. This savage extermination appears to have been perpetrated in revenge for the death, not long before, of the duke of Clarence, who fell in a rash attack on a superior force of Scottish troops in French pay. These faithful auxiliaries seem, indeed, to have been, at this time, the main support of the national cause, and in the following year they formed the strength of the army, which fought the strenuously contested battle of Verneuil, gained by the duke of Bedford over a force doubling the numbers of his own. Never was victory more fiercely contended for than on this bloody day; and it was at last decided by a powerful reserve of archers, which, after having repelled a determined charge made by a strong body of Italian cavalry on the English rear, was brought up fresh, and flushed with victory, to the support of their countrymen. The duke of Alençon yielded himself prisoner, and the earl of Buchan was killed.¹ These brilliant successes were, however, rendered ineffectual by the absurd ambition of the duke of Gloucester, who employed the troops which were urgently required by the regent in aid of the great objects of the war, in a miserable attempt to enforce his own claims, in right of his wife Jacqueline, to the lordship of Brabant. Bedford was, moreover, at this critical period, compelled to leave France, that he might mediate between Gloucester and Beaufort.

But a crisis was now approaching which was to render all these achievements ineffectual, and to commence a series of events which were to terminate in the final extinction of all schemes for the permanent subjugation of France. The duke of Bedford, who was no less eminent as a statesman than as a warrior, seems to have been fully aware of the precariousness of the tenure by which England held her French conquests; and when the question, whether the English troops

¹ Monstrelet.

should pass the Loire, was agitated among his councillors, gave his decided opinion against the enterprise. He suffered, however, his own better judgment to be overpowered by the urgency of others, and gave a reluctant consent to the employment of an army in the siege of Orleans, a place strongly fortified and of the utmost importance as the key of the southern provinces. The earl of Salisbury, reputed the ablest of the English generals, took the command of the besieging troops, and, on the 12th of October, 1428, encamped before the city. The French, meanwhile, were not negligent of their interest: La Hire, Xaintrilles, Dunois, the most illustrious warriors of their age and country, were on the spot, and a strong garrison occupied every assailable point. At an early period of the siege the English sustained the irreparable loss of their commander, who was mortally wounded while reconnoitering the defences; he was succeeded by the earl of Suffolk, and for a time the operations were pushed forward vigorously and successfully. In February 1429, the 'Battle of Herrings' was gained by Sir John Fastolfe—a gallant officer, *maugre* the liberties taken with his name—and the investment of the place having been completed, the besieged offered to surrender upon terms which were, however, deemed inadmissible. At this desperate moment when all seemed lost, and the French monarch, abandoned by many of those who had hitherto held to him in all fortunes, was meditating a retreat to the south-eastern extremity of France, he was saved by one of those miraculous interferences which are, every now and then, occurring in history, as if for the express purpose of baffling human counsel, and bringing to nought the enterprises of men. Joan d'Arc, the daughter of poor labouring peasants of Domremy, and herself the menial of a petty inn,² suddenly appeared upon the scene, claiming to have been sent by the decree and inspiration of heaven for the deliverance of France. This is not the place for inquiry, special and minute, into all the circumstances of this singular transaction; notwithstanding that the general opinion seems to incline towards the belief, that the enterprise of the 'Maiden' was undertaken without previous counsel or arrangement, and that it was the unsuggested impulse of her own fanaticism, there are indications, neither few nor unimportant, which may lead to an opposite conclusion; none, however, that can in the slightest degree impeach her character, or justify the inhuman conduct of her destroyers. Leaving, then, these doubtful investigations, it may suffice to say, that the French leaders exerted themselves with energy and ability, while the presence of Joan of Arc inspirited the soldiery, La Hire and Dunois directed the operations. The English generals, on the contrary, seem to have acted with little either of talent or boldness; they allowed Orleans to be relieved almost without opposition, and suffered themselves to be divided and beaten in detail. Suffolk and Talbot were taken prisoners, as they deserved, for fighting without concert, and under circumstances which made defeat certain, and would have neutralised success, had success been possible. Joan entered Orleans in triumph, and conducted Charles in safety through a hostile territory to Rheims, where his coronation was regularly performed. The mission of the 'Maiden' was now completed, and her career well nigh run; she failed in an attempt

² Monstrelet.

to storm Paris, and in May 1430 was made prisoner by the Burgundians, who sold her to the English, by whom, in the following year, she was burnt as a witch.³ It is customary, at this particular point, for the historian of the times to stop and tax his invention for novelties in the way of indignant reproach of the English chiefs for this atrocious execution. Perhaps, however, there may have been somewhat too much of this. If we, of the present day, have ceased to burn and drown for the imputed crime of witchcraft, it may be well to allow due force to the consideration that, in the fifteenth century, it was guilt little less than that of sorcery itself, either to doubt of its existence, or to extend mercy to the sworn lieges of the prince of darkness. Perhaps, too, it may tend to diminish an excess of sympathy with the 'Maid of Orleans,' if it be recollected, that but a few short days before her own capture, she ordered a Burgundian general, taken in fair battle, to be beheaded on the field. After all, France was more indebted to the strife of parties in England, and to the secession of the duke of Burgundy from the English alliance, than to the relief of Orleans, or the consecration at Rheims. The death of the duke of Bedford, in September 1435, delivered the French from their most formidable enemy.

In the meantime, England was oppressed by the evils of a minority. Misrule prevailed in the government, disorder and speculation in the finances; at home the state of society was unsettled, and abroad, the French war wasted the sources of the national strength, while it abundantly enriched those favoured individuals who were enabled to profit by its casualties. The regency of France yielded to Bedford 20,000 crowns monthly; and in one year the government of Normandy realized the sum of 950,000 francs.⁴ In the negotiations for peace, which took place at Arras in 1435, the reasonable conditions offered by the French were rejected by the English, and the duke of Burgundy immediately concluded a separate treaty, and the death of the duke of Bedford gave the final blow to the supremacy of England. The duke of York and other officers made a gallant stand against the advancing and increasing power of France, but the pressure was too strong for their means of resistance, and, in the event, nearly every vestige of invasion was swept away.

Years, meanwhile, were passing away, and Henry was advancing towards his majority. He made repeated efforts to obtain a more decided participation in the government, but they were rendered ineffectual by the *veto* of Beaufort and his coadjutors in the council, of whom the earl of Suffolk was the most influential. To the counsels of this nobleman is to be ascribed the marriage of the young Henry with Margaret of Anjou, daughter of the titular king of Sicily and Jerusalem. These disastrous nuptials were attended by strange circumstances. In all such transactions, it had been usual to seek for some substantial advantage, in the shape either of treasure or of territorial acquisition, but in the present instance Suffolk consented to purchase a dowerless bride by the cession of important districts in France. She was, indeed, beautiful, accomplished, and high spirited, but her personal interference in the administration was most injurious to the coun-

³ Meyer, 316.

⁴ Philip de Comines.

try, while to herself, her family, and friends, it was destructive. The first act of the party, with which this ill-judging woman chose to identify her interests, was the arrest and probable murder of the duke of Gloucester early in 1447. Six weeks afterwards, his old and unrelenting enemy, Cardinal Beaufort, went to his account—a prelate described by the old chronicles, as “more noble of blood than notable in learning, haught in stomach, and high in countenance; rich above measure of all men, and to few liberal; disdainful to his kin, and dreadful to his lovers; preferring money before friendship; many things beginning and nothing performing.”⁵ By the death of these statesmen, Suffolk was raised without a rival to the summit of power, but his unpopularity continued and increased, nor could the queen’s favour shield him from impeachment. Many of Suffolk’s acts were singularly impolitic, and liable, if not to suspicion, at least to severe animadversion, yet his enemies seem to have been at a loss for matter of positive accusation, and they were at last compelled to adopt an extrajudicial procedure, for the purpose of effecting his banishment. He sailed from Ipswich, but a squadron from the cinque-ports interrupted him, and, after a mockery of trial, he was beheaded with a rusty sword, by an inexperienced hand. His administration had sown abundantly the seeds of disaffection, and his death awakened apprehensions of vindictive visitation. The men of Kent rose under the command of Jack Cade, who assumed the name of Mortimer, and obtained, for a time, unresisted possession of London, but was ultimately expelled by the armed citizens, aided by the garrison of the tower. This was the crisis of Cade’s fortunes; his followers were tempted by an amnesty to disperse, and he himself was slain, fighting valiantly. But a more powerful, and, though not a braver, a more skilful leader, was about to take the field against the Lancastrian king and his imperious bride. Richard, duke of York, inherited the claims of the dispossessed line, and, amid the most spacious professions of fidelity and loyalty, was steadily watching the course of events, and awaiting the favourable moment for decisive action. He was a gallant and successful soldier; his campaigns in France furnish sufficient evidence of his military talents, and had he possessed, in addition to his other high qualities as a commander, the discriminating energy which distinguished his son, he might have anticipated him in the attainment of royal honours. The Lancastrian family had held the throne long enough to acquire all the right that possession can give; but the pretensions of the duke of York were, in theory, the best founded. Although the descendant of a younger branch, on the paternal side, he inherited from his mother the claims of the Mortimers, derived from the daughter of Lionel, elder brother of John of Gaunt, the founder of the house of Lancaster. The session of parliament which took place at the close of the year, in 1451, was marked by extreme violence between the two parties, and early in the following year the duke raised troops in Wales from among the retainers of the house of Mortimer, and advanced towards London. Failing in his attempt on the capital, he fell back to Dartford, where, after some negotiation, he laid down his arms, and was, after some hesitation, per-

⁵ Hall.

mitted to retire unharmed to his own estates. To the humanity of the king, York was mainly indebted for his life. The duke of Somerset, the near relative and favourite councillor of the monarch, strongly urged extreme measures; but the mild and merciful Henry shrunk from blood, and the lords of the council were influenced by a report, that the earl of March was advancing to his father's rescue.

The year 1534 was marked by important circumstances. The queen was delivered of a son, to whom was given the popular name of Edward; but the favourable effects of this event were much diminished, by the national indignation at the disastrous issue of the war in France, when the last possessions of the English, in the south, fell into the hands of the French king. The most influential event, however, was the indisposition of Henry, who sunk into a state of mental and corporeal debility, which entirely disabled him from the slightest interference in the business of government, and threw the administration of affairs into the hands of the duke of York, who was, in March, 1454, declared protector, an office which he held but for a few months, the king recovering his health, and resuming, in the course of the same year, the exercise of his regal office. Henry was now placed in circumstances of much difficulty. One of the first acts of the protector had been the imprisonment of his great opponent, the duke of Somerset; and it might have been expected that this violent measure would be severely visited, when the recovery of the king should restore his favourite to liberty and power. Henry's conduct was, however, at once humane and wise. He strove to reconcile the rivals; and, although he must have sustained much urgency to extreme measures, from his queen and from Somerset, he found, in the kindness of his own heart, motives for firm resistance. His benevolence was ill repaid. York probably felt that, although the king was to be trusted, those about him were actuated by feelings too fiercely vindictive, and by suspicions too reasonable, to admit of a temporizing policy. He acted with decision and promptitude: at the head of his armed retainers, and seconded by the earls of Salisbury and Warwick, he advanced upon London, and encountered the royal forces at St Alban's, May 22, 1455. He gained a complete victory. Somerset, Northumberland, Clifford fell, and Henry was made prisoner. A confused series of intrigues and feuds followed this event. For a season York administered the national affairs, under his old title of protector. The king, who has been well described as "the only impartial man in his dominions,"⁶ laboured to bring all parties to a reasonable compromise, and he so far succeeded, as to get up a showy and theatrical affair of a procession to St Paul's, in which those who had, until then, been inveterate foes, walked arm in arm, as inseparable friends: this was early in 1458, and, before the year was out, the parties were quarrelling more fiercely than ever. In 1459, the wrangling grew to fighting; Salisbury gained a victory over the royalists at Bloreheath, but, before the end of the month, the treachery of Sir Andrew Trollop compelled the Yorkists to disperse without further contest. Then came confiscations and attainders, on the part of the Lancasterians—enterprises and successes, on that of their antagonists;

⁶ Lingard.

until the battle of Northampton, brief but bloody, gave them anew the ascendancy, and the custody of the king's person. The duke of York now ventured a farther and bolder step: he claimed the throne, as of right, unimpaired by the lapse of time during which it had been unclaimed. This demand was laid before Henry, whose reply was short and pithy—"My father was king; his father was also king; I have worn the crown forty years, from my cradle; you have all sworn fealty to me as your sovereign, and your fathers have done the like to my fathers; how then can my right be disputed?" The question of right was largely discussed in the house of lords, and various schemes were proposed for its settlement: at length it was proposed, and ratified by the agreement of both parties, that Henry should possess the crown for life, but that its reversion should be in the duke and his heirs.⁷ The queen, however, and a powerful party still made a resolute stand for the line of Lancaster; the duke of York suffered himself to be brought to action, near Wakefield, on terms of inferiority, and paid the penalty of his rashness with his life. His youngest son, the duke of Rutland, then only in his twelfth year, was butchered after the battle by 'bloody Clifford.' The war now assumed a sterner and a higher character. Edward, the heir of York, appears to have been a consummate warrior, rapid and decisive in his movements, skilful and forecasting in his arrangements. He was, at the time of his father's death, at the head of a separate division, and, on learning that event, he hastened to intersect the line by which the victors were marching on the capital. A force, inferior to his own, but still formidable in numbers, under the command of the earl of Pembroke, pressed upon his rear, and not only impeded his movements, but threatened to place him between the two royalist armies, which were now in the field. Edward, however, was a commander too decided in character, and too prompt in evolution, to be thus caught in a trap. He turned fiercely on his pursuers, and put them to the rout with tremendous slaughter, at Mortimer's Cross, near Wigmore. The victory was followed by executions, in savage retaliation for his father's and his brother's death. This action was fought on the first of February, 1461; and, on the 17th of the same month, the success was balanced by the defeat of Warwick, at St Alban's, where he was attacked by the queen's army, and saved from irretrievable ruin only by the approach of night. Henry was found by the victors in his tent, and once more embraced his wife and son. But Edward was on his march, flushed with conquest, and the troops which fled from St Alban's had rallied on his victorious battalions; the royal army retired northwards, and he entered London in triumph. Rejecting all temporizing measures, he accepted the defiance of his antagonists, as a violation of the late agreement, and at once, amid the shouts of the Londoners, assumed the titles and offices of royalty. The day of his proclamation, March 4, 1461, is historically taken as determining the reign of Henry VI.; and, from that date, Edward IV. stands in the national annals as king of England.

If personal character, if amiable dispositions, perfect integrity, and steady piety, could, in unstable times, have given stability to the throne, the sovereignty of Henry would have been unchallenged; men

⁷ Rot. Parl. v. 377.

of all ranks and every party would have given their willing service to a king who seems, in perfect freedom from every taint of selfishness, to have, in simple sincerity, desired the well-being of his subjects, without a reserve for his own interest. Ambition he had none—his were the virtues of private life; and it may be questioned, whether he were not happier even in his hours of imprisonment, than when seated on an unsteady and ensanguined throne. It is not, however, to be overlooked, that in perilous and uncertain seasons, dispositions of this kind may effect irreparable mischief. An indolent or weak-minded acquiescence becomes not the character or conduct of him to whose authority and management the fortunes of the commonwealth are intrusted. Henry, too, had difficulties to struggle with, before which more resolute spirits might have quailed. A turbulent people opposed him on one hand, while an imperious wife urged him on the other; and he was compelled to yield an assent to much which his kind feelings lamented, and his better judgment disapproved.

Out of all these evils good was elicited, though probably less than might have resulted from a different state of things. The interference of parliament in the government of the realm became daily more necessary and more decided. The lords assumed a lofty attitude, as the ultimate referees in extreme cases; and the commons claimed an unlimited control over the public revenue and expenditure.

John, Duke of Bedford.

DIED A. D. 1435.

UPON the decease of Henry V., John of Lancaster, duke of Bedford, was appointed to the regency of both kingdoms, with the administration of France. Inferior to his brother, the late king, in abilities, he greatly surpassed him in the more amiable qualities of the heart, to which he also added—what was more rare in these days—great prudence and sagacity. By his judicious management of the foreign regency, the provinces recently torn from the crown of France were retained for his infant nephew, notwithstanding the impolitic attempt of Gloucester upon Hainault, and the want of harmony which perpetually disturbed the counsels and operations of the allies. It was with extreme reluctance that this cool-headed and experienced nobleman consented to the rash attempt which was made by the allies upon the provinces behind the Loire. It is not indeed easy to guess how the expedition against Orleans could have been made without his consent; but the fact is certain, that he disapproved of the whole plan of that campaign—the result of which we have detailed in the preceding memoir—for, in a letter addressed, after its failure, to the king his nephew, he uses the following language: “All things prospered with you, till the tyne of the seage of Orleans, taken in hand God knoweth by what advice.”¹ The death of the duchess of Bedford, sister to the duke of Burgundy, in 1432, shook the alliance which had hitherto existed between the English and Burgundians; and the precipitate union of the regent with

¹ Rot. Parl.

Jacquetta, or Jacqueline of Luxemburg, a vassal of the Burgundian, which took place within one year after the late duchess's death, hastened the dissolution of the confederacy. It was in vain that the cardinal of Winchester laboured to effect a reconciliation betwixt the two dukes. The high spirit of Bedford felt mortally aggrieved at the taunts with which he of Burgundy had received intelligence of the projected marriage; and the Burgundian not less keenly resented the disrespect offered to his sister's memory. Cardinal Beaufort, indeed, succeeded in bringing them both to consent to an interview at St Omer; but they eagerly availed themselves of some trifling point of etiquette, to decline a personal conference, and departed in mutual and irremediable disgust. Bedford lived to witness, and doubtless to lament, the bitter fruits of his obstinacy. The negotiations of Arras annihilated Henry's power in France; and before the congress, which met there in 1435, had broken up, the gallant Bedford, worn out by past efforts and the pressure of hopeless anxiety, expired at Rouen. He left the reputation of a prudent statesman and able general, and his memory was justly respected both by friends and foes. He was buried in the cathedral of Rouen, on the right hand of the high altar; and when, some years later, it was suggested to Louis XI. to remove his bones to a less honourable situation, that monarch is reported to have replied: "I will not war with the remains of a prince who was once a match for your fathers and mine, and who, were he now alive, would yet make the proudest of us tremble. Let his ashes rest in peace; and may the Almighty have mercy on his soul."²

Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester.

DIED A. D. 1447.

ON the death of Henry V., the duke of Gloucester preferred a claim to the regency on two grounds:—first, because in the absence of his elder brother, the duke of Bedford, he was the nearest of kin to his nephew,—and secondly, because the late king, while on deathbed, had appointed him to that charge. The lords held that his demand was not founded either on law or precedent; but, to satisfy him, appointed him president of the council of regency, with the title of 'protector of the realm and church of England.' The history of his protectorate presents one continued struggle with Thomas, bishop of Winchester, afterwards cardinal. Gloucester was supported by Richard, duke of York, and the Plantagenets; the cardinal wielded the influence of the church, and had for his lay-representative, Henry Beaufort, afterwards duke of Somerset. The protector endeared himself to the nation by many popular qualities, and particularly by the liberal and munificent spirit which he displayed upon all-fitting occasions; and his connexion with the regent gave him a decided advantage, had he known how to make use of it, in every struggle with his great political rival. Unfortunately he suffered himself to be swayed in too many instances by personal considerations; and carried away by the impetuosity of his passions,

² Hall, 129.

lent himself to measures which unnerved the very arm which it was his best policy to strengthen and support. Such was his unadvised and hasty marriage with Jacqueline of Hainault, who, after having been previously betrothed to the elder brother of the king of France, bestowed her hand upon the duke of Brabant, and finally fled from her husband to the court of England, where her charms, and perhaps still more her splendid inheritance, comprising Holland, Zealand, Friesland, and Hainault, won the heart of the duke of Gloucester. Having obtained a divorce between her and the duke of Brabant from the anti-pope, the protector took this woman for his wife, and immediately laid claim to her dominions. The duke of Burgundy, though the ally of England, supported Brabant, and entered so keenly into the question of her injuries, as to defy Gloucester to single combat. The challenge was fiercely accepted; but before the duel took place, a bull from the legitimate pope appeared, declaring Jacqueline's third marriage to be null and void, and forbidding the intended combat, under pain of excommunication.

In 1428, a lady of the name of Stokes, attended by the wives of the principal citizens of London, went to the house of lords, and presented a petition against the duke, accusing him of neglecting his lawful wife, the duchess Jacqueline, and of living in open adultery with Eleanor Cobham, daughter of Reginald Lord Cobham of Sterborough. Eleanor appears to have been a woman of exquisite beauty, but highly dissolute morals. She had already lived with different noblemen before Gloucester took her under his protection. To the surprise of Europe, the duke met the protest of the fair citizens of London, by publicly acknowledging Eleanor as his wife; while Jacqueline, with equal sense of delicacy, bestowed her hand upon a gentleman called Frank of Bursellen, who was immediately seized by the Burgundians, and only regained his liberty by his wife ceding the greater part of her dominions. The cardinal eagerly improved the advantages which such infatuated conduct on the part of his rival placed within his reach; and during the absence of Gloucester in Hainault, garrisoned the tower of London, and committed it to the care of Sir Richard Wydevile, with orders 'to admit no one more powerful than himself.' When the duke returned and found the gates of the tower closed against him, he retaliated, by ordering the mayor to shut those of the city against the bishop. The next morning, the retainers of Beaufort attempted to force their way into the city, and declared that they would at least prevent the duke from quitting it. In this state of matters, the parties were with difficulty persuaded, through the intervention of the archbishop of Canterbury, to keep the peace till the return of the duke of Bedford, who was immediately called from Paris for the purpose of mediating betwixt the two rivals. The regent, on arriving in England, instantly summoned a parliament at Leicester, before which the duke of Gloucester preferred a bill of impeachment against his uncle the bishop, in which he charged him, among other things, with having hired an assassin to cut off the late king while he was yet prince of Wales. In what manner the trial proceeded, we are not informed. But the quarrel was finally adjusted in appearance through the mediation of the primate, and eight other arbitrators, whose exertions produced a show of apology from the bishop, which was accepted by Gloucester. The

mutual animosity of the two ministers was, however, too strong to be annihilated by any such feeble measures, and each continued to labour secretly to strengthen their own influence by the advancement of their dependants. In 1439, the two rivals tried their strength in the question relating to the duke of Orleans, who had been a prisoner since the battle of Agincourt, and now petitioned urgently for his liberty. The cardinal favoured, the duke opposed his petition. The king decided in favour of the former, and Gloucester lodged a solemn protest against the measure.

In the following year the duke experienced a still more humiliating defeat at the hands of his rival. An accusation of sorcery and treason was brought against his concubine, Eleanor. Roger Bolingbroke, one of the duke's chaplains, had been accused of necromancy, and on his apprehension declared that it was at Eleanor's instigation that he first applied to the study of magic. An investigation followed, and an indictment of treason was soon afterwards found against Bolingbroke and Southwell, a canon of St Paul's, as principals, and Eleanor as an accessory. The former were charged with having prepared, at the solicitation of Eleanor, a waxen image of the king, and to have exposed it to a slow heat, with the design, according to the principles of necromancy, of doing serious injury to the health of the person it represented. Southwell died before his trial; Bolingbroke was executed; and Eleanor did penance for her crime by walking 'hoodless, save a kerchief,' through the streets of London to St Paul's, where she offered a taper. She was then committed to the custody of Sir John Stanley, who sent her to his castle of Chester, whence she is traced to Kenilworth, where she disappears from history.¹ The proud and lofty spirit of Gloucester must have burned at the disgrace thus inflicted on him at the instigation of his rival, but he was 'obliged to take all patiently, and said little,' for the cardinal had now, by his insidious representations, effectually poisoned the ear of the credulous monarch against his uncle.

The final attack on Gloucester was made in the year following that of the king's marriage. "It is a transaction," says Mackintosh, "buried in deep obscurity, of which a probable account may be hazarded, but of which little, except the perpetration of an atrocious murder, can be affirmed with certainty." The old chroniclers do not hesitate to attribute Gloucester's death to the malevolence of the queen and Suffolk, aided by the duke of Buckingham, and the two cardinals of Winchester and York.² The administration of public affairs had now fallen into the hands of William de la Pole, earl and afterwards duke of Suffolk, who soon saw in Gloucester a popular and formidable rival, and to rid himself of him, is supposed to have eagerly adopted the policy of his patron, the cardinal, and lost no opportunity of infusing into the mind of Henry suspicions of his uncle's loyalty. On the 10th of February, 1447, the duke repaired from his castle of Devizes to Bury, to attend the opening of a parliament which Henry had summoned to meet there. The assembly opened in the usual form, and the first day passed in tranquillity; but on the morning of the second, the lord viscount Beaumont, as constable of England, arrested the duke of Gloucester for divers acts of high treason. Seventeen days later he was found dead in his

¹ Ellis's Royal Letters, 2d Series, i. 107.

² Hall.

prison. Reports were spread that he had died of apoplexy, and his body was exhibited to public view to show that it bore no marks of violence; but suspicion whispered that there had been foul play in the business. "Some," says old Hall, "judged him to be strangled: others write that he was stifled or smouldered between two feather beddes." No legal inquiry was instituted into the circumstances of his death, nor does such seem to have been demanded. His friends made several efforts to clear his memory from the stain of treason, but the king remained obstinate; the bill was repeatedly thrown out, and a great part of his estates were conferred on Suffolk and his adherents.

This ill-fated prince was the Mæcenas of his age, and to his encouragement of literature England is deeply indebted. He is supposed to have been the founder of the Bodleian library, and under the patronage which he so readily extended to men of letters, many learned foreigners were induced to settle in England, bringing with them the arts and learning of the west and south. His vices were many, but he also possessed some splendid virtues, which cast a redeeming lustre over his character; his kindness of disposition won for him the epithet of 'the good;' while his undeviating and impartial justice procured him the still more honourable appellation of 'the father of his country.'

Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury.

BORN A. D. 1372.—DIED A. D. 1453.

THIS distinguished warrior—second son to Richard Lord Talbot—was born at Blechmore in Shropshire, in the reign of Richard II. He married Maud, the eldest of the two daughters and co-heiresses of Sir Thomas Neville. In the first year of Henry V. he was committed to the tower, but the nature of his offence is not upon record, and he appears to have been but a short time in confinement. He was present at the siege of Caen in 1417, and afterwards distinguished himself at the successive sieges of Rouen, Mans, and Pontoroso. At the ever-memorable siege of Orleans, Talbot displayed such resistless valour that his courage became proverbial even with the enemy. On the capture of the earl of Suffolk, Talbot succeeded to the command of the English forces, and retired towards Paris, but was overtaken at Patay. On this occasion, Sir John Fastolfe advised Talbot to continue his retreat as expeditiously as possible, but the latter refused to show his back to the enemy, and was in consequence made prisoner, after a sharp action, with the loss of twelve hundred men. After a tedious captivity of three years and a half, the duke of Bedford found means to have him exchanged for Xaintrailles, a French officer of great reputation. He now again hastened to the field, and took several fortified places with his accustomed skill and bravery. The capture of Pontoise was effected by him in a singular manner. In the beginning of 1437, the weather was so extremely cold, that the generals on both sides suspended military operations. But Talbot having collected a body of troops, and caused them to put white clothes or shirts over their other clothes, in order that they might not be easily distinguished from the snow with which the ground was then covered, brought them by a

night march up to the walls of Pontoise, and making an unexpected attack upon the garrison, made himself master of that important place. His next conquests were Harfleur, Tankerville, Crotay, Longueville, Carles, and Manille; for all which important services he was advanced to the dignity of earl of Shrewsbury, in May, 1442. He was afterwards appointed to the command in Ireland, with the title of earl of Wexford. But his presence was soon found indispensable for carrying on the war in France. His promptitude and valour protracted the fall of Rouen a brief space. Perceiving that the French had gained a rampart which had been entrusted to the charge of the citizens, he rushed to the spot, precipitated himself upon the assailants, hurling the foremost of them into the ditch beneath, and having repelled the enemy, put the treacherous sentinels to the sword. In 1452, we find the veteran warrior—now in his eightieth year—again taking the field, and performing his usual wonders. Landing with four thousand men, and supported by the good-will of the Gascons, he advanced upon Bourdeaux, whereupon the French garrison, frightened, as Fuller quaintly observes, by the bare fame of his approach, fled from the spot. Chatillon, in Perigord, having surrendered soon afterwards to his arms, Charles despatched a formidable force to recover it, and Talbot hastened to sustain his capture. By the celerity of his movements he surprised and cut to pieces a French detachment; but on approaching the body of the enemy he found it advantageously posted and well-prepared to sustain his attack, being strongly entrenched and provided with a field of artillery. Undismayed, however, by the fearful odds, and flushed by his recent success, the veteran hazarded an assault, and was so gallantly supported by his men, that for a time the balance of victory hung in suspense. But a shot having struck down their general, and Count Penthievre coming up at the critical moment with fresh troops, the English gave way and retreated on all sides. Talbot was first buried at Rouen in France, but his body was afterwards removed to Whitchurch in Shropshire. He has been called ‘the English Achilles,’ and seems to have merited the title, if indomitable valour and nearly uniform success in his personal encounters might confer it.

Sir John Fastolfe.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1378.—DIED A. D. 1459.

SIR JOHN FASTOLFE, whose name has obtained so whimsical a species of immortality from the unwarrantable liberty taken with it by our great dramatist, was descended from an ancient and honourable English family in the county of Norfolk. Being left a minor, he became the ward of Thomas Mowbray, duke of Norfolk. On the accession of Henry IV., he entered the service of the duke of Clarence, whom he accompanied to Ireland. During his residence in that country, he married the widow of Sir Stephen Scroope. He commenced his military career in Henry the Fifth's expedition against France, and won his spurs by his honourable services in the war which followed. For having retaken the town of Meulent from the French, he was created a banneret, and entrusted with an extensive lieutenancy; and shortly

afterwards was honoured with a knight-companionship of the garter, having been adjudged more worthy of that high honour than Sir John Radcliffe, his gallant companion-in-arms. Monstrelet has affirmed, that for subsequent cowardice, the duke of Bedford deprived the new knight-companion of his garter, but this is altogether a misrepresentation of facts. Fastolfe never was tried for any charge, and, therefore, could not be degraded; he never ceased to enjoy the confidence of the duke; nor, if he had, was it in the duke's power to deprive him of what was the gift of his sovereign; and as to the alleged piece of misconduct, his retreat, namely at Patay, when Talbot and Hungerford were taken prisoners, the movement by which he saved himself from sharing their fate, has been pronounced by good judges to have been a very masterly display of military science, and not less worthy of praise than any of those actions by which he had previously earned the reputation of a brave and skilful officer. In 1431, Sir John accompanied the regent into France, and was soon afterwards despatched on an embassy to the council of Basle. When Richard, duke of York, succeeded to the command in Normandy, he evinced his sense of Fastolfe's merits and services by bestowing upon him an annual pension of £20.

At length, after having borne arms in the service of his country, during a period of above forty years, he retired in 1440 to his ancestral estates in England, and settled at Caister in Norfolk, where he built a very splendid castle, which he rendered the scene of much hospitality and magnificence. The Paston letters have thrown considerable light on Sir John's private history and character, of which Miss Roberts has diligently availed herself, in her memoirs of the rival houses of York and Lancaster. From the quotations inserted in that work, it would appear that while Fastolfe proved himself a liberal master and a bounteous patron of the clergy, he did not disdain to avail himself of some of those questionable means of increasing his worldly estates, which the manners and customs of the age allowed. One of the Paston letters displays his eager anxiety to procure the wardship of a young heir, and the management of the minor's estate; and in another, Fastolfe, though loaded with wealth and honours, the result of his French campaigns, speaks of his services as 'never yet guerdoned, or rewarded.' Yet this poor, unrewarded veteran died possessed of sixteen manors, landed estates in forty-nine different places, and coined money to the value of about £40,000 of our present currency!¹ It was his well-known wealth, probably, that suggested to Queen Margaret and her ministers the charge of treason against our knight on the occasion of Cade's rebellion. The attempt, however, failed, and Sir John was allowed to spend his declining years in peace. He died, after a lingering illness, in 1459. His funeral obsequies were celebrated with much pomp at Norfolk, where he was buried in the abbey-church of St Bennett.

¹ *Archæologia*, vol. xxi.

Sir Thomas Lyttleton.

DIED A. D. 1481.

THE circumstances under which England was placed by her early wars and internal dissensions, laid the foundation for that complicated legal system which has brought into action so many powerful and accomplished minds. The subject of the present sketch has an ample right to be ranked as the head of the numerous band of excellent men who have laboured to regulate and explain this system, the evidences he has left of his knowledge and ability having stood the test of professional examination through many generations of active inquirers. This distinguished lawyer was born about the beginning of the fifteenth century, and was the eldest son of Henry Westcote, Esq., and Elizabeth, the daughter and sole heiress of Thomas Lyttleton or Lyttleton, a person of great wealth at Frankley in Worcestershire, and according to whose will his daughter's eldest son was to take the name and bear the arms of Lyttleton. It is not known in which university Sir Thomas was educated, but having completed his studies, he became a member of the Inner Temple, and was some time after appointed to the honourable office of reader. The ability which he displayed at this early period of his career introduced him to the notice of Henry the Sixth, and he was created steward or judge of the palace or marshalsea. In the May of 1454, he obtained the rank of king's sergeant, and was made one of the judges of the northern circuit.

The period in which he had to exercise these important functions was one of almost unequalled disorder and turbulence. It was not long after his appointment to the bench that that fearful struggle began between the houses of York and Lancaster, which converted their quarrel into a war, and caused the ruin of the noblest and most wealthy families in the kingdom. Did no other testimony remain to prove the worth and integrity of Sir Thomas Lyttleton's character, the fact that throughout these troubles he was equally respected by both parties, would be sufficient for that purpose. The high legal situation he occupied, made it incumbent on him not to interfere in matters which might either disturb his own steadiness of judgment, or render his decisions the subject of suspicion. That he did not, is clear from the circumstance which has been stated, and we accordingly find, that when Edward the Fourth ascended the throne, he was among the first whom the new monarch received into favour, and was allowed to retain the offices which had been bestowed upon him by the unfortunate Henry.

In the year 1466, he was made one of the judges of the common pleas, and took the Northamptonshire circuit. About the same time, also, he received another mark of royal favour in the shape of a writ directed to the commissioners of customs for the ports of London, Bristol, and Kingston-upon-Hull, whereby they were ordered to pay him a hundred and ten marks per annum to support his dignity, a hundred and six shillings eleven pence halfpenny to buy him a furred robe, and sixty-six shillings and sixpence more for another robe, technically called *Linura*. About nine years after, he was made a knight of the

Bath, and while exercising his important duties as a judge, undertook, for the instruction of one of his sons, his celebrated work on the Institutes of the Laws of England—a treatise of which it was eloquently said by Sir Edward Coke, “that it is a work of as absolute perfection in its kind, and as free from error as any he had ever known to be written of any human learning;” and that it is “the ornament of the common law, and the most perfect and absolute work that ever was written in any human science.”¹

It is supposed that this treatise was finished but a short time previous to his death, which occurred on the twenty-third of August 1481, the day after his last testament was dated. He left three sons, the issue of his marriage with the daughter of Sir Philip Chetwin, and the honourable reputation he had acquired was worthily kept up by the learning and dignity which long characterized his family. His funeral took place in Worcester cathedral, where a monument was raised to his memory, and the parish-churches of Frankley and Hales-Owen were adorned with his portrait. “There,” remarks his learned commentator, “the grave and reverend countenance of the outward man may be seen, but he hath left this book as a figure of that higher and nobler part, that is, of the excellent and rare endowments of his mind, especially in the profound knowledge of the fundamental laws of this realm. He that diligently reads this his excellent work, shall behold the child and figure of his mind, which the more often he beholds in the visual line, and well observes him, the more shall he justly admire the judgment of our author and increase his own.” But the greatest praise, perhaps, which a writer or commentator ever passed upon an author, is that contained in this declaration of Sir Edward: “Before I entered into any of these parts of our institutes, I, acknowledging myne own weakness and want of judgment to undertake so great works, directed my humble suit and prayer to the author of all goodness and wisdom, out of the Book of Wisdom: ‘Oh, Father and God of mercy, give me wisdom, the assistant of thy seates: Oh, send her out of thy holy heavens, and from the seate of thy greatness, that she may be present with me, and labour with me, that I may know what is pleasing unto thee.’” The deference paid to the rules laid down in this work by the most enlightened lawyers of different periods, confirms all that Sir Edward has said on its merits. It is recorded, that four of the greatest judges in the reign of James the First, that is, Sir Henry Hobart, and the judges Warburton, Wynch, and Nichols, upon giving their opinion on a disputed point, publicly declared, that “they owed so great reverence to Lyttleton, that they would not have his case disputed or questioned.” But it is not simply for the legal knowledge displayed in this celebrated work that the author merits the high fame he has acquired, he was learned not merely in all the branches of his profession, but in every species of literature that could strengthen or enlarge his

¹ In order to show the little respect which was as yet felt for the English language by the lawyers of this period, it may be mentioned, that the ‘Institutions’ were written in French. It also appears, that the work was not published till a considerable time after it was written, both the author and his son Richard, for whom it was composed, being dead before it was given to the public. The first edition of it was published at Rouen, but as few books were sent to press at that early period but such as were generally esteemed, it is probable that it had already acquired great popularity by circulation in manuscript before it appeared in print.

mind. That he was one of the acutest logicians of the age is amply proved by the manner in which he has argued the most subtle points of his science; and that he possessed the varied erudition necessary for the efficient exercise of the most important duties with which a man in power can be charged, is asserted in the emphatic eulogy with which Sir Edward Coke concludes his panegyric.

It is worthy of observation, that at the period when Sir Thomas flourished, England possessed besides himself several men alike eminent in the profession of jurisprudence. Among these were Sir Richard Newton, Sir John Priscot, Sir Robert Danby, William Ascough, Sir John Fortescue, Sir John Markham, and others of similar celebrity. Before the time of these distinguished civilians, the English law was but a maze of doubt and difficulty. They contributed to clear up many of its mysteries by their strong good sense, by the fidelity with which they laboured at their judicial duties, and by the learning which most of them brought to the exercise of their functions. A higher degree of importance, therefore, now began to be attached to the legal character than it had ever yet enjoyed; and from this era, the civilians of England are seen endowed with a rank and influence which rendered them one of the most powerful classes in the state. Of those who flourished with Sir Thomas Lyttleton, some appear to have taken a much deeper share in the political struggles of the times than himself. This was especially the case with Sir John Fortescue, of whom we now subjoin a brief notice.

Sir John Fortescue.

DIED CIRC. A. D. 1485.

THIS eminent English lawyer was descended from an ancient Devonshire family, and third son of Henry Fortescue, lord-chief-justice of Ireland. The time and place of his birth is matter of uncertainty. He is supposed to have been educated at Oxford, and to have studied law in Lincoln's inn. In 1430 he was made sergeant-at-law, and in 1441 was appointed king's sergeant. From this latter period preferments were showered upon him. The next year he was appointed chief-justice of the king's bench, with a special annuity from the privy purse for the better maintenance of his rank and station. He remained in great favour with Henry VI., and served him faithfully in all his troubles. In 1648 he accompanied Queen Margaret and Prince Edward into Lorrain, where he helped to alleviate the bitterness of their exile by his counsels and presence, and drew up for the instruction of the young prince his celebrated treatise, '*De laudibus legum Angliæ*,' in which he endeavours to impress his pupil with the just idea, that the constitution of England was a limited monarchy. In this work—which, though received with great applause by the jurists of the day, was not published till the reign of Henry VIII.—Sir John styles himself '*Cancellarius Angliæ*,' but as his name does not appear in the patent rolls, it is probable, as Selden suggests, that he received this dignity from the fugitive monarch during his exile in Scotland. Returning to England with the queen, Sir John was taken prisoner on

the defeat of her party at Tewksbury, and, though Edward IV. made rather a cruel use of his victory, yet he not only spared the life of our venerable jurist, but even, soon afterwards, received him into favour. Softened by this kindness, and probably regarding the hopes of the Lancastrian party as now for ever annihilated, Sir John not only began to acknowledge Edward's title to the crown, but wrote in defence of it. It does not appear, however, that he ever departed from his original views of the English constitution as a limited monarchy. Some of his manuscripts are still preserved in public libraries. They bear the following titles: 'Defensio juris domus Lancastriæ,' 'Genealogy of the House of Lancaster,' 'Of the title of the House of York,' 'Genealogiæ Regum Scotiæ,' 'A Dialogue between Understanding and Faith.' He appears to have withdrawn into the country some years before his death, which is supposed to have occurred at Ebburton in Gloucestershire, in the church of which parish his remains were interred. His editor, Fortescue Aland, has said of him, that "all good men and lovers of the English constitution speak of him with honour, and that he still lives, in the opinion of all true Englishmen, in as high esteem and reputation as any judge that ever sat in Westminster hall."

From the accounts generally given of this eminent lawyer, he may, indeed, be regarded as deserving, like Lyttleton, the gratitude of posterity for having greatly contributed to promote the fair interpretation and proper administration of the fundamental laws of the realm, but doubts have been expressed as to the propriety or honesty of his political conduct. It has been asked, how, as the chief minister of Henry VI., he could favour the cruel persecution of the duke of Gloucester? Or how, as an upright man, he could write in defence, which it appears he did, first of one and then of another of the rival houses? The character of Sir Thomas Lyttleton, on the other hand, is left unstained by suspicions of this nature, and from the praise accorded him for the practice of all the virtues of domestic and social life, as well as for his learning and ability, he may be considered as meriting in every way the reverence of posterity.

Edward IV.

BORN A. D. 1440.—DIED A. D. 1482.

EDWARD had now two important points in his favour,—the possession of the capital, and a title conferred according to the usual constitutional forms. He was, however, sovereign of only half his kingdom: if the southern and middle counties acknowledged his dominion, the northern provinces were warm in the Lancastrian cause. Notwithstanding the dissolute and voluptuous habits which had at an early period been permitted to obtain the mastery, Edward's was a character of singular energy and self-possession when under the impulse of a stirring motive, and he was fully aware that, in the present instance, nothing short of instant and decided effort was adequate to the crisis. Three days after his accession, his advanced guard, under the orders of the earl of Clifford, quitted London for the north; in five days more, he followed in person with the remainder of his army; and at

Pontefract, he passed in review nearly forty-nine thousand soldiers. Margaret's force was larger; her general, the duke of Somerset, was at the head of sixty thousand men, encamped near York. After some previous fighting, in which Clifford was killed, the main armies met, and the field of Towton was the scene of a bloodier fight than the civil broils of England had yet witnessed. No quarter was given on either side. The battle began in the evening, and was maintained with untiring rancour through the night until noon of the following day, when Edward, having been compelled by the superior numbers of the enemy, to bring up all his reserves, was making his last efforts, but, at the critical period of nearly entire exhaustion on both sides, the duke of Norfolk brought up a reinforcement, which decided the victory against the queen's army.¹ The slaughter was terrible: the retreat of the Lancastrians was intercepted by a river, and the pursuit of the Yorkists was unrelenting. The number of those who fell varies, in the different estimates, from 30,000 to 40,000. Henry and his queen, with the dukes of Somerset and Exeter, fled to Scotland.

After some farther movements in prosecution of his victory, Edward returned to London, leaving Lord Montague to watch the Lancastrians. This general raised the siege of Carlisle, beleagured by the Scots, whose alliance Margaret had purchased by the surrender of Berwick. On the 29th of June, Edward was crowned at Westminster, and met his parliament as the acknowledged king of England. The session was distinguished by nothing so much as by the number of bills of attainder which were passed, involving all the more distinguished adherents to the house of Lancaster in one common ruin. Margaret, however, was still active, and with an army of French and Scottish auxiliaries gave employment in the north to Edward's generals, and called Edward himself once more to the scene of action. where, however, his stay was brief. It was during this season of perilous enterprise that the thousand-times-told adventure of the forest bandit is said to have happened to Margaret and her son. In 1464, the Lancastrians hazarded a more decided effort, but their array was broken up by the activity of Nevil, Earl Montague, who routed Percy at Hedgeley Moor, and the duke of Somerset at Hexham. Both leaders were slain,—the first on the field, Somerset on the scaffold. Henry himself, after evading, during more than a year, all attempts to discover his concealment, was betrayed by a monk, and, in July, 1465, became the prisoner of Edward. The king had now leisure for measures of general policy, and negotiated treaties of amity with nearly all the leading European sovereigns. His chief advisers, in all matters of state, appear to have been the brothers of the family of Nevil, the earls of Warwick and Montague, the last in particular was his especial favourite. It has, however, seldom occurred, that such a connexion as that between Edward and the Nevils, has been lasting, and the present case affords no exception to the general rule. Edward's marriage may probably be taken as the remote cause of the breaking up of a union apparently so strong in the mutual attachment and common interest of the parties. It was the king's misfortune to be conspicuously endowed with exterior graces; and these gave him, in his intercourse with

¹ Hearne's Fragment, as cited by Turner.

females, advantages which he abused, until he became wholly possessed by a spirit of reckless libertinism : his appetites were his masters, and the grosser sensualities of the table were added to what are usually deemed more refined gratifications of sense. The chase alone relieved, by intervals of manly exercise and exertion, the course of debauchery in which he was now wasting his fine constitution, embruting his moral faculties, and debilitating his powerful mind. Thus given over to habits of self-indulgence, it was his chance to encounter a lovely and fascinating woman, the widow of a Lancastrian officer, who had fallen in civil broil. His passions were kindled, but the lady—whether from virtuous or from interested motives may well be doubted—rejected every licentious proposal, and at length the amorous king made her his wife; an act which gave great and just offence to Warwick, who had been urging a marriage of policy. The doubt suggested in the previous sentence, is not unadvisedly offered, for the conduct of the queen and her family was marked by a spirit of ambition and rapacity rarely equalled in the records of favouritism. A prudent affectation of humility and disinterestedness might have done much towards soothing disappointment and pacifying discontent ; but even decency was disregarded in the exultation of unanticipated advancement. A large and hungry family clamoured for the good things in the gift of their powerful relative, and the gratified voluptuary was neither slow nor niggard in his benefactions. The five sisters of Elizabeth Wydevile were made—probably more in constraint than in liking on the part of the bridegroom—the wives of so many wealthy and powerful young noblemen ; her brothers caught titled heiresses in the scramble, and the younger was fortunate enough to capture a dowager duchess, rich and eighty. Lord Mountjoy was displaced from the treasurership of England, in favour of the queen's father ; and the staff of lord-high-constable, wrested from the grasp of the earl of Worcester, was consigned to the same ready hand. This ' fell swoop,' in the way of monopoly, struck despair to the hearts of the needy and expectant, who always throng a court, and, had it done no more than this, little harm had been wrought ; but there were others who looked on with a loftier and more menacing displeasure—the men whose abilities entitled them to a share in the administration of the realm, and whose station gave them a vantage ground for the attainment of the objects of their legitimate ambition. Edward, in his doting favouritism, even ventured to lay hand upon that from which gratitude, no less than policy, should have taught him to abstain. The younger brother of the Nevils had been made archbishop of York, and from him, on some ground of jealousy against himself and his brothers, the king resumed two manors of which the prelate was the grantee. Various circumstances occurred to widen the breach between Edward and the earl of Warwick, whose daughter had lately been married, much to the king's annoyance, to George, duke of Clarence, the second of the three royal brothers. The administration of the Wydeviles seems to have been, from whatever cause, unpopular, and insurrections broke out, in which the father and brother of the queen were seized and put to death. Without taking an ostensible share in these tumults, Warwick reaped their full advantage ; and the result of all this folly, misgovernment, and treason was, that the king became, in 1469, the prisoner of the earl. Considerable obscurity rests

upon these events, and much secret history requires to be brought to light, before they can be adequately explained. Although it nowhere appears that the insurrections in question were directly instigated by Warwick, yet they happened most opportunely for his interests; he was ready to turn them to his own ends; and at his orders the rebels returned quietly to their homes. He was not, however, acting in behalf of the house of Lancaster, since he put down, with the utmost promptitude and rigour, in the name of Edward, an attempt in its favour, made by its partizans in the north. It appears probable that Warwick had overrated his own influence, and that he found, in the disposal of a prisoner like Edward, a problem too difficult for his solution. 'The king's name' was 'a tower of strength' only in the king's cause; and though the upstart and overweening favourites had made themselves odious to the people, Edward himself was a popular monarch, and his subjects were by no means inclined to throw him aside at the mere mandate of Warwick. Be all this as it may, the earl found himself compelled to release his thrall, and a reconciliation, apparently cordial, took place. This was toward the close of 1469, yet, early in the following year, Edward was saved from a fresh and probably fatal imprisonment, only by intelligence whispered in his ear, by his own presence of mind, and by the swiftness of his horse. Clarence and Warwick now acted in open rebellion, but so rapid and well-directed were the movements of the king, that they were counteracted in every effort, and compelled at last to quit the country, and seek safety in France. Here the turbulent earl, much to the dissatisfaction of Clarence, negotiated under the auspices of the French king, with Margaret. His daughter was accepted as the bride of the heir of Lancaster, and active preparations were made for the invasion of England. Edward, in the mean time, was indemnifying himself for his late anxieties and exertions, by a total neglect of business, and an entire surrender of all his faculties to enervating pleasure. In this state, he was surprised by the landing of Warwick, who moved on with such celerity, as to leave the king, abandoned by his troops, and betrayed by Montague, who had hitherto professed friendship, no resource but flight. After encountering much danger in his brief voyage, he landed in Holland, October, 1470: the queen took sanctuary in Westminster. Warwick, 'the king-maker,' was now at the height of his success: he entered London in triumph, released Henry from the Tower, and proceeded, in the usual course, to reverse attainders, and reward his friends with the spoils of his enemies. To his honour be it mentioned, that, although the war of the Roses had been marked by a fearful system of sanguinary reprisal, excepting in one righteous instance, he shed no blood.

But Edward's character, sunk and degraded while prosperity smiled upon him, was of intense energy and strength when roused by adverse circumstances. In this crisis of his fortunes, he acted on the boldest construction of the antique monition—*contra audentior ito*. Obtaining from his ally, the duke of Burgundy, the means of raising and transporting troops, he sailed for England, entered the Humber, and landed at Ravenspur, March 14, 1471, with about 2000 determined men; his brother, the duke of Gloucester, was with him. No one joined him, but his resolution was taken, and he moved boldly on

York, giving out everywhere that he was come solely to claim his father's inheritance, as duke of York; a pretext which probably availed him much, by furnishing the timid or neutral with a pretext for non-interference. From York he marched to Doncaster, passing, on his route, near Pomfret, where lay Lord Montague, at the head of a force which Dr Lingard, without any qualification, affirms to have been "sufficient to overwhelm the invaders." This, however, is utterly improbable: the brother of Warwick was an able and enterprising commander, nor can there be any question of his fidelity to the cause he had now embraced. It is quite clear that he only abstained from fighting because his soldiers were unequal, either in numbers or quality, to the hazards of a conflict with a band so determined and so resolutely led, as that which defiled within four miles of his castle walls. At Nottingham, he was joined by six hundred men; at Newark, the duke of Exeter and 4000 men fled before him, without striking a blow; at Leicester his little army had increased to upwards of 6000 good soldiers, and he marched at once on Coventry, where Warwick had sheltered himself behind the strong fortifications of the place. Edward here challenged the 'king-maker' to personal conflict, and on the earl's refusal, took possession of the town of Warwick, where he was joined by his brother Clarence. He was now at the head of an effective force, and, resuming the royal title, he pushed forward for the capital, which he entered on the 11th of April. Warwick and Montague had by this time formed a junction, and were following him on the road to London, when the king drove in their advance at Barnet, in the neighbourhood of which town the battle was fought, April 14, 1471. There appears to be little doubt of the Lancastrian superiority in point of numbers; but this disadvantage was more than compensated by the conduct and brilliant valour of Edward. His left wing was outflanked, and, notwithstanding the gallant efforts of Lord Hastings, driven from the field; but this disaster was more than retrieved by the king's fierce and decisive charge on the Lancastrian centre under Somerset, and by the success of the right wing of the Yorkists, commanded by the duke of Gloucester, who succeeded in turning the enemies' left, though the great earl himself was there. Both the Nevils fell, and this, the death of Warwick especially, was of higher importance than the mere victory could by any possibility have been. The 'king-maker' bore a charmed name, that, in common belief, secured success to whatever cause he might undertake. Edward's work, however, was not yet done: on the precise day of the battle of Barnet, Margaret landed at Weymouth, and was joined by her partisans, including the duke of Somerset, and the other leaders who had escaped from the rout at Barnet. A powerful army was collected, and it became a matter of question whether it were wiser to make for the northern counties, where the house of Lancaster had a powerful interest, or to move at once for London. In either case it was necessary to evade the vigilance of Edward, who was placed in the difficult situation of making his anxiety to come to immediate action subordinate to the necessity for watching the two roads to the north and to the capital. He manœuvred with uncommon skill, and, by two or three forced marches, compelled his enemies to make a final stand at Tewkesbury, on the 4th of May. Their position was exceedingly strong, but Edward ordered an immediate attack, and, after

a severe conflict, which the ability and bravery of Somerset, the Lancastrian commander, rendered for some time doubtful, obtained a splendid victory. Many of the leaders of the defeated party took sanctuary, and the king at first promised to spare their lives, but afterward ordered their place of refuge to be forced, and this act of violence was speedily followed by their public execution. A yet darker deed has been charged upon his memory; it is asserted by the greater number of historians, that when the heir of Lancaster, a fine youth of seventeen, the only son of Henry and Margaret, was brought prisoner to the tent of Edward, and to a taunting question made a spirited reply, the savage victor struck him on the face with his gauntleted hand, a signal too well understood by Clarence and Gloucester, who completed, with their swords, the murderous transaction. There are, however, other authorities which speak of the prince's death as occurring in the field. Henry did not long survive his son; on the 22d of May, he *died* in the Tower, and general belief has fixed the guilt of his death on the duke of Gloucester; but independently of this common credence, there does not appear sufficient evidence for the imputation, while there are strong reasons for acquitting him of a crime unprofitable to himself, and tending only to strengthen the cause of those who stood between him and the throne. If Henry were murdered, his fate was, no doubt, hastened by the vigorous efforts of Lord Falconbridge, in behalf of the fallen party, and which were at one moment formidable enough to call Edward abruptly from the scene of his triumphs at Tewkesbury. Margaret of Anjou was made a prisoner, and, after a lapse of five years, obtained her release, on payment of a ransom: she died in 1482. Wretched, indeed, must have been the remaining years of that proud and unrelenting princess. The blood of her brave and loyal nobles had been poured out like water in her cause; her husband and her son had perished in the sanguinary struggle; and, with all this, she must have felt that, in her savage treatment of the duke of York, she had but taught "bloody instructions, which, being taught, returned to plague the inventor."

Edward was now seated firmly on his throne, but his greatness was in the hour of action, not in the season of repose. He commenced a war with France; but his ministers were bribed by Louis XI., and he suffered himself to be persuaded into a pacific course. But a darker cloud was hovering over him; the domestic curse which filled his family with feuds and murders, began its deadly work, and its first dire impulse was the shedding of a brother's blood. The duke of Clarence appears to have been weak, selfish, and ambitious. During the life of Warwick, he suffered himself to be made the mere tool of that aspiring noble, and after Edward's restoration, he quarrelled with the duke of Gloucester on pecuniary matters. In this variance, which was never made up, he was decidedly in the wrong; in the affair which led to his destruction the blame lay with the king. Clarence was highly popular, and this was enough to keep alive a spirit of jealousy in his brother, who became suspicious of his intentions, and when a fair chance presented itself to the duke of obtaining the hand of the heiress of Burgundy, interfered to prevent it, instigated, probably in part by the queen, who was anxious to procure so advantageous a match for her brother,

Lord Rivers.¹ Farther dissensions, and, it may be, domestic intrigue, led to a fatal catastrophe; Clarence was condemned by the house of peers, and put to death in the tower, February 17th, 1478. Reckless and hard of heart as Edward had become, he was constrained to feel that, Cain-like, he had slain his brother: from that time he became more and more irritable, and frequently lamented that no one had been found to intercede for the life of Clarence. His own death was at no great distance. In the midst of active preparations for the invasion of France, he was seized with a malady which terminated his life, April 9, 1482.

Such were the leading events which distinguished the career of this man of brilliant, though perverted faculties. His eminent mental and personal endowments he degraded into the mere auxiliaries and incitements to sensual gratification, and his popular manners were but the specious covering to a vindictive and despotic temper. His parliament knew that he was not to be trifled with; and during the latter years of his reign he established a system of police which placed the entire realm under a jealous and severe inspection. Yet, amid these unfavourable circumstances, the nation advanced in all that constitutes national prosperity. It may be questionable whether this were owing to a judicious administration of the powers of government, or to the energy and activity of the native character; but the fact is certain.

Edward V.

BORN A. D. 1470.—DIED A. D. 1483.

LESS than three months included the entire term between the accession and deposition of this young prince, and with little more than this brief notice the history of his nominal reign might be dismissed, were it not for the convenience of making this the place for a general exhibition of the state of parties and circumstances at this eventful season. The queen and her family had, as has been already intimated, availed themselves of their situation to accumulate among themselves and their friends the chief offices of influence and profit; and he late king, in the contemplation of his approaching death, made all his dispositions with a view to the confirmation of their authority. Their friends, however, seem not to have been numerous, and the more powerful of the nobility, offended probably by the rise and rapacity of an inferior family, were hostile to their claims, nor did they adopt a course of policy either wise or vigorous enough to meet the urgency of the crisis. The proposal to surround the young king with an efficient body of troops was overruled. The queen's brother, Lord Rivers, suffered himself to be circumvented and arrested by the dukes of Gloucester and Buckingham, without means of resistance, or chance of escape. Respecting the views of such other of the nobles as were active in political affairs, it is not easy to speak with decision. Lord Hastings had been the personal friend of Edward IV., and was now, as it should seem, faithful to the cause of his son; but he was the determined enemy of the queen's

¹ Hall.

family, and gave his effective assistance to the scheme for their destruction. In this state of things, the prospect of civil commotion became hourly more threatening, and nothing prevented its immediate outbreak but the bold, rapid, and unscrupulous conduct of the duke of Gloucester. That prince was, when his brother died, in the north, and on hearing the news, caused his nephew to be proclaimed. He then set off immediately for the capital, and on his road became master of the royal person, maintaining the most respectful demeanour, and professing the most devoted loyalty. In London, the council of state met at the tower, where the young king resided, but a more subtle and more powerful divan held its consultations at Crosby house, the residence of Gloucester, who had been appointed protector. The work of usurpation was hurried fiercely on, nor were even the forms of justice observed in its bloody transactions. Lord Hastings was beheaded without a trial, on the 13th of January, 1483, and as little ceremony was used in the execution of Earl Rivers, Lord Grey, and Sir Thomas Vaughan. The next step was to gain possession of the queen's younger son, the duke of York, and these preliminary outrages having removed all present difficulties, after a little manœuvring, the mask was thrown aside, and the duke of Gloucester assumed the title and the state of royalty. His accession bears date, June 26th, 1483.

Richard, Duke of York.

BORN A. D. 1410.—DIED A. D. 1460.

By the death of Edmund, earl of March, the hereditary pretensions of the house of Clarence became vested in Richard Plantagenet, duke of York, the son of Anne Mortimer. Richard, however, was only fourteen years of age at this time, and, therefore, did not excite any serious apprehensions on the part of Henry VI., then filling the throne of England. During the contentions which ended in Gloucester's death, the duke was engaged in foreign service in France; but, on the demise of that nobleman, he was called upon to relinquish his post in Normandy, in favour of the duke of Somerset. This invidious preference provoked the indignation of York, who shortly afterwards impeached the duke of Somerset for the loss of Normandy and Aquitaine. It was, however, fortunate for York, that Somerset should have thus superseded him, for he was thereby saved encountering that shame and obloquy which the inevitable surrender of the possessions of England in France drew down upon his successor. His appointment to the government of Ireland failed to satisfy his ambition, or allay his discontent; and, in 1452, he quitted that country without the permission or recall of the king, and proceeded to his castle in Wales, whence he set out for London with a retinue of 4000 men. Arriving at Westminster, he obtained an audience from Henry. His conduct in this interview is differently represented by different writers. In the preamble to his subsequent attainder, it is stated that he introduced armed men into the presence-chamber, and that he retired covered with confusion at the king's rebuke; but, in the Paston letters, we find the following passage, which sets his behaviour in a more favourable light:—

"It is said that my lord of York has been with the king, and departed in right good conceit with the king, but not in great conceit with the queen."¹ Margaret is supposed to have boldly charged the duke with treasonable practices, and to have urged his instant committal to the tower; but it is certain that the duke prevailed upon Henry to summon a parliament, and in the interim he retired to his castle of Fotheringay. He was scarcely gone, when Somerset arrived from France; but he had lost the confidence of the people by his loss of Normandy, and York's party hesitated not to impeach him. Early on the sitting of parliament, Young, one of the members for Bristol, after insisting on the necessity of naming the heir apparent, the king being yet without issue, boldly moved that the duke of York should be declared heir; but the suggestion was ill received, and Young was sent to the tower to expiate his boldness in confinement. After a prorogation of six weeks, the two houses met again, and York openly accused Somerset of misconduct and corruption in managing the affairs of France; but the queen's influence upheld the favourite, and York, after having narrowly escaped assassination, withdrew in sullen discontent to his castle at Ludlow. He now summoned the tenants of the house of Mortimer to his standard, and marched upon London, but finding the gates shut against him, turned towards Dartford, where he entrenched himself upon a heath, and fortified his camp with artillery. The king closely following his opponent's route, drew up his forces at Blackheath, and despatched a deputation to inquire the cause of his kinsman's hostile appearance. York made the usual protestation of loyalty, but declared that he had been driven to take up arms, in consequence of the repeated attempts which had been made to indict him of treason, and for the security of himself and the people at large against the wicked designs of these malevolent men who now shared the king's councils. He pointed to the duke of Somerset, by name, as the chief cause of his own and the nation's grievances, and demanded that he should be forthwith put upon his trial. It was deemed prudent by the king's friends to affect the appearance at least of concession to these demands. The king assured him that he still held him to be a true and faithful subject, and his own well-beloved cousin, and likewise assured him that a new council should be immediately appointed, of which he should form a member, and which should decide all matters now in dispute or debate. For his more thorough satisfaction and assurance, the duke of Somerset was reported to be in custody by the king's command. Satisfied with these concessions and promises, York instantly disbanded his army, and repaired alone and uncovered to Henry's tent, where, to his surprise and consternation, he was confronted by Somerset, who appeared at perfect liberty, and as high as ever in the king's favour. The two rivals fiercely retorted the charge of treason upon each other. Somerset accused York of designs upon the crown, and called upon the king to arrest him as a traitor. York replied with equal spirit; but on quitting the royal tent, found himself a prisoner. Somerset would have had his rival led forth to instant execution; but the mild genius of Henry prevailed, and he contented himself with exacting a solemn and public oath of fealty and allegiance from the duke.

¹ Fenn's Collection, vol. i.

The birth of Edward lowered the hopes of the Yorkists; but we have seen that the indisposition into which Henry soon afterwards sunk, rendered the recall of the duke of York into the cabinet a measure of necessity, and gave him, for the time, a complete ascendancy over his rival, who was committed to the tower. On this occasion York protested "that he did not assume the title or authority of protector, but was chosen by the parliament of themselves, and of their own free and mere disposition; and that he should be ready to resume his obedience to the king's commands, as soon as it was notified and declared unto him by the parliament, that Henry was restored to his health of body and mind."

By his marriage with the lady Cicely Neville, the duke gained the powerful support of her brothers, the earls of Salisbury and Warwick. These potent barons were easily induced to second their relative in his struggle for political ascendancy after Henry's recovery. "It was during this period," says Sir James Mackintosh, "that the whole people seem gradually to have arrayed themselves as Yorkists or Lancastrians. The rancour of parties was exasperated by confinement to narrow circles and petty districts. Feuds began to become hereditary, and the heirs of the lords slaughtered at St Albans, regarded the pursuit of revenge as essential to the honour of their families, and as a pious office due to the memory of their ancestors." The king, in the midst of these distractions, laboured assiduously, but in vain, to calm the angry passions of his nobles, and establish unanimity in the national councils. The pageant of a public reconciliation was enacted, but the stratagems of the queen again excited the distrust of the Yorkists, and the duke returned in disgust to his castle of Wigmore, the ancient seat of the Mortimers. Salisbury went to Middleham in Yorkshire, and Warwick to his government of Calais.² "But," says old Hale, "although the bodies of these noble persons were thus separated asunder by artifice, yet their hearts were united and coupled in one." They planned a junction, the result of which, as we have elsewhere detailed, once more threw the government into their hands. A parliament which assembled at Westminster, after the battle of Northampton, annulled all the recent proceedings which had been levelled against the Yorkists; and a few days afterwards, Richard, duke of York, having returned from Ireland, whither he had fled after his defeat at Ludlow, entered London, and riding to Westminster, presented himself in the upper house, in an attitude, and under circumstances which unequivocally indicated the views and wishes by which he was now animated. Stepping forward to the royal throne, he laid his hand upon the cloth of state, and stood for a short time in that attitude, as if waiting for an invitation to place himself on it. But every voice was silent, the nobles stood mute, and neither by word nor sign manifested the slightest token of approbation. The duke, thereupon, somewhat disconcerted, withdrew his hand, and this movement was instantly applauded by the circle around him. The archbishop of Canterbury taking courage from these indications of right feeling on the part of the spectators, boldly inquired, whether he would not wait upon the king, who was now in the

² "Then," says Comines, "considered as the most advantageous appointment at the disposal of any Christian prince, and that which placed the most considerable force at the disposal of the governor."

queen's apartment? To this question he indignantly replied, "I know no one in this realm who ought not rather to visit me." He then hastily withdrew, and took up his abode in that part of the palace which had been usually reserved for the accommodation of the king himself. Even the duke's party were not prepared for such a step as this; but Richard felt that he had now committed himself, and took his resolution accordingly. On the 16th of October, 1460, his counsel delivered to the bishop of Exeter, the new chancellor, a writing, containing a statement of his claims to the crowns of England and France, with the lordship of Ireland. In this writing, having first derived his descent from Henry III., by Lionel, duke of Clarence, third son to Edward III., he observed, that on the resignation of Richard II., Henry, earl of Derby, the son of John of Ghent, the younger brother of the said Lionel, against all manner of right, entered on the crowns of England and France, and the lordship of Ireland, which by law belonged to Roger Mortimer, earl of March, great-grandson to the said Sir Lionel: whence he concluded, that of right, law, and custom, the said crown and lordship now belonged to himself, as the lineal representative of Roger Mortimer, in preference to any one who could claim only as the descendant of Henry, earl of Derby.³ We have already related in what spirit Henry received the first communication of York's pretensions; he concluded his address to the lords who waited upon him on this occasion, by commanding them "to search for to find in as much as in them was, all such things as might be objected and laid against the claim and title of the said duke." The lords devolved this duty upon the judges, who excused themselves from entering upon so delicate and dangerous a task, by observing that their office was not to be of counsel between party and party, but to apply the laws of the realm to such matters as came before them; that the present question was above law, and appertained not unto them, and that only the lords of the king's blood, and the high court of parliament, could decide it. The king's serjeants and attorney were then called upon for an opinion; and they also presented their excuses, alleging, that since the matter was so high, that it passed the learning of the judges, it must needs exceed their learning. But the apology was not received; the lords found that these officers were bound to give advice to the crown, and directed them as counsel for the king, to draw up an answer to Richard's claims. In the issue, the following objections—which we shall state in the words of Dr Lingard—were drawn up and sent to the duke:—"1. That both he and the lords had sworn fealty to Henry, and of course he, by his oath, was prevented from urging, they by theirs from admitting, his claim. 2. That many acts passed in divers parliaments of the king's progenitors, might be opposed to the pretensions of the house of Clarence, which acts have 'been of authority to defeat any manner of title.' 3. That several entails had been made of the crown to heirs male, whereas he claimed by descent from females. 4. That he did not bear the arms of Lionel the Third, but of Edmund the Fifth, son of Edward III. And, 5. That Henry IV. had declared that he entered on the throne as the true heir of Henry III.' To the three first objections, the duke's counsel replied:—'That as priority of descent was evidently in his

³ Blackm. p. 375.

favour, it followed that the right to the crown was his, which right could not be defeated by oaths or acts of parliament, or entails. Indeed, the only entail made to the exclusion of females, was that of the seventh year of Henry IV., and would never have been thought of, had that prince claimed under the customary law of descents. That the reason why he had not hitherto taken the arms of Lionel, was the same as had prevented him from claiming the crown, the danger to which such a proceeding would have exposed him. And, lastly, that if Henry IV. pronounced himself the rightful heir of Henry III., he asserted what he knew to be untrue. As, however, the principal reliance of his adversaries was on the oaths which he had taken, and which it was contended were to be considered as a surrender of his right by his own act, he contended that no oath contrary to truth and justice is binding. That the virtue of an oath is to confirm truth, and not to impugn it; and that as the obligation of oaths is a subject for the determination of the spiritual tribunals, he was willing to answer in any such court all manner of men, who had any thing to propose against him." The lords resolved that the title of the duke of York could not be defeated; but proposed a compromise by which Henry acknowledged York as heir-apparent, notwithstanding the existence of the infant prince of Wales. On the adjustment of this important affair, the king and the duke went in state to St Paul's, to make their thanksgivings. But the spirit of Margaret was not so easily subdued as that of her husband. Instead of obeying the order which York procured, requiring her instant presence in London, that warlike dame hastened to join Northumberland and Clifford in the north. The duke of Somerset and the earl of Devon marched to her standard; and the coalition thus formed assembled a most formidable force at York. On receiving intelligence of these proceedings, York hastened, with a small body of men, to Sandal castle, near Wakefield, leaving his son and heir, the earl of March, to follow more at leisure with fresh supplies. Here his best advisers wished him to remain until the arrival of the expected reinforcement, but in opposition to such wise counsel he rashly determined to hazard a battle. It is said by some authors that the bitter taunts of the enemy provoked him to this rash step; but others with more probability suggest that Richard found himself driven to the necessity of risking an engagement by want of provisions; whatever it was that dictated the line of conduct which he now pursued, he seems to have forgotten that precaution which had hitherto been one of his characteristics, and to have rushed headlong and blindfold on certain destruction. On the last day of the year 1460, he drew out his troops on Wakefield common, and was instantly hemmed in on all sides by the greatly superior force of the enemy. A horrid scene of carnage ensued. The Yorkists fought with the fury of despair; but their desperate and unyielding courage availed them not. Within half an hour of the onset, nearly 3000 of York's followers lay dead on the field, while their leader himself and Salisbury, covered with wounds, had fallen into the hands of their assailants. Salisbury was decapitated the next day at Pontefract. Authors differ respecting the fate of York, Whethamstede affirms that he was taken alive, and his dying moments embittered by the brutal derision of his enemies, who, placing him upon an ant-hill for a throne, with a crown of grass round his temples,

hailed him,—‘ King without a kingdom ! prince without a people !’ Others affirm that he was killed in the fight, but add that his inanimate remains were treated with the most brutal indignity ; that Clifford bore his reeking head upon a pole into the presence of the queen, exclaiming,—“ Madam, your war is done ; here is the ransom of your king !” and that the unfeeling woman laughed aloud at the fearful spectacle, and ordered her brutal ally to attach the bloody head to one of the gates of the city of York.⁴ In the pursuit, Clifford overtook Richard’s youngest son, the earl of Rutland, a boy in his twelfth year. His tutor, a venerable priest, was hastening with him from the field of conflict towards Wakefield, in hopes of finding shelter for his young charge in that town. They were stopped on the bridge, and Clifford, attracted by the rich garments of the boy, asked “ Who is he ?” Unable to speak through terror, the poor boy fell on his knees, and began to implore mercy ; and his faithful preceptor, thinking to save him, exclaimed,—“ He is the son of a prince, and may, peradventure, do you good hereafter !” “ The son of York !” shouted the bloody Clifford. “ Then as thy father slew mine, so will I slay thee, and all thy kin !” And plunging his dagger into the heart of the young prince, he bade the tutor bear the tidings of what he had seen to the boy’s mother.

Owen Tudor.

DIED A. D. 1461.

QUEEN CATHERINE, widow of Henry V., soon after the death of her gallant and accomplished husband, bestowed her hand upon Sir Owen Tudor, a simple Welsh knight, whose graceful manners and great personal beauty had captivated the fair and royal matron. Sandford bears witness to the good taste at least which Catherine displayed in the selection of this husband ; for he tells us that Sir Owen was so “ absolute in all the lineaments of his body, that the only contemplation of it might make a queen forget all other circumstances.” Catherine indeed seems to have forgotten, or disregarded many circumstances which should have deterred her from a union so much beneath her in dignity, and so likely to prove the forerunner of family discord. She was a Frenchwoman, however, and cared little for the objections which were urged against her gratifying her own feelings in the disposal of her hand a second time. When Tudor’s kindred and country were objected to amongst other things, she expressed a desire to see some of his kinsmen. “ Whereupon,” says Wynne, “ he brought to her presence John Ap Meredith and Howell Ap Llewellyn Ap Howell, his neare cozens, men of goodly stature and personage, but wholly destitute of bringing up and nurture, for when the queen had spoken to them in divers languages, and they were not able to answer her, she said that they were ‘ the goodliest dumbe creatures that ever she saw.’” Three sons were the fruit of this union. The two elder, Edmund and Jasper, were created earls of Richmond and Pembroke by their half-brother, “ with pre-eminence,” says Fuller, “ to take place above all earls, for kings

⁴ Whet. 439.

⁵ Hull.

have absolute authority in dispensing honours." The younger entered into a religious community and died a monk. Upon the death of Catherine—which happened in 1437—Tudor was committed to prison for contempt of the royal prerogative, in marrying a tenant of the crown without previously obtaining the royal license. The hardy Welshman soon made escape from his confinement, but was afterwards retaken and committed to the castle of Wallingford. Miss Roberts has given a passage from a manuscript chronicle in the Harleian library, which, as she observes, goes far to disprove the ostentatious account so industriously circulated by Henry VII. and his partizans, respecting the royal descent of that monarch's paternal ancestor. It runs thus: "This same year one Oweyn, no man of birth neither of livelihood, broke out of Newgate against night, at searching time, through help of his priest, and went his way, hurting foule his keeper. The which Oweyn had privily wedded the Queen Katherine, and had three or four children by her, unweeting the common people till that she was dead and buried." Sir Owen perished at last upon the scaffold, having been taken prisoner by young Edward after the battle at Mortimer's cross, and instantly sacrificed to the revengeful feelings which then filled the conqueror's bosom.

Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester.

BORN A. D. 1428.—DIED A. D. 1470.

JOHN TIPTOFT, earl of Worcester, one of the few literary ornaments of England in the 15th century, was born at Everton in Cambridgeshire, and educated at Baliol college, Oxford, where, as his contemporary John Rous of Warwick informs us, he greatly distinguished himself by his application to study and progress in the literature of the age. Upon the death of his father, Lord Tiptoft, in the twenty-first of Henry the Sixth's reign, he succeeded, while yet a minor, to the great estates of his family, and at the age of twenty-two was elevated to the earldom of Worcester. Three years later he was appointed lord-treasurer of England, and in the twenty-seventh year of his age he was commissioned with some other noblemen to guard the channel,—a task which he performed with equal honour to himself and advantage to his country. Withdrawing himself for a time from public life, he visited the Holy land, and returning by Italy, spent some time in Padua, then the great seat of learning for Europe, and graced by the presence of Ludovicus Carbo, Guarinus, and John Phrea, an Englishman, all famous for their learning. On this occasion, Phrea dedicated two of his works to the noble and accomplished young Englishman, of whom, amongst other complimentary things, he says: "Those superior beings whose office it is to be the guardians of our island of Britain, knowing you to be a wise and good man, an enemy to faction, and a friend of peace, warned you to abandon a country which they had abandoned, that you might receive no stain from associating with impious and factious men."¹ This is quite in the style of the age; but

¹ Leland, p. 477.

the fact appears to have been, that Tiptoft long balanced in his own mind the comparative advantages of adherence to the rising or to the sinking party, and unable at the moment to decide, wisely resolved on withdrawing himself from the scene altogether, until the great national struggle had been decided. He continued at Padua for the space of three years, during the heat of the civil wars in his native country. Laurentius Carbo represents him as so exceedingly fond of books, that during his residence at Padua, he plundered, so to speak, the libraries of Italy to enrich those of England. On his return home, he presented the literary spoils thus acquired to the university-library of Oxford. Before quitting Italy he visited Rome, and being introduced to Pope Pius II. addressed his holiness in a Latin oration, which drew tears of admiration from him. After it became known that Edward was firmly seated on the throne of England, Tiptoft returned to England, and was received into favour with that prince, who loaded him with honours, and at last appointed him lord-lieutenant of Ireland and constable of England. But on the brief restoration of Henry, this accomplished nobleman was seized, condemned, and beheaded at the tower in 1470, on a charge of mal-administration in Ireland. "O good blessed Lord!"—exclaims Caxton, in allusion to his unhappy fate—"what grete losse was it of that noble, virtuous, and well-disposed lord, the earl of Worcester! What worship had he at Rome in the presence of our holy father the pope, and in all other places unto his death! The axe then did at one blow cut off more learning than was in the heads of all the surviving nobility." The earl translated Cicero's treatises 'De Amicitia,' and 'De Senectute,' which were printed by Caxton in 1481. Some other pieces of his still remain in manuscript, and several have been lost.

Wydeville, Earl Rivers.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1442.—DIED A. D. 1483.

THE accomplished Anthony Wydeville, Earl Rivers, was the son of Sir Richard Wydeville, by Jacqueline of Luxemburg, duchess-dowager of Bedford, who, like Queen Catherine, had not hesitated to bestow her hand on the man she loved, though, in doing so, she outraged some just notions of propriety and dignity. The subject of our present sketch was born about the year 1442, and, while yet a youth, took an active part with his father in supporting the sinking interests of the Lancastrian family. When Denham, by a bold and unexpected descent on Sandwich, had surprised Lord Rivers, who was engaged in fitting out an armament in that port, the young Rivers shared his father's captivity, and was carried with him to Calais, where he nobly endured the rude reproaches of Warwick and his coadjutors Salisbury and March. The marriage of Edward with Elizabeth, the sister of Anthony Wydeville, changed the politics as well as fortunes of the house of Rivers. Soon after his sister's marriage, Anthony obtained the hand of the orphan daughter of Lord Scales, and in addition to his wife's estates, succeeded also to her father's title. In 1467, in a solemn and magnificent tournament held at Smithfield, probably in honour of

the marriage of the king's sister with Charles, duke of Burgundy, Anthony twice overcame the Count de la Roche, and won for himself the highest reputation for skill and chivalric courtesy. Equally distinguished as a warrior and a statesman,—‘*vir haud facile discernas manuve aut consilio promptior,*’ in the words of Sir Thomas More,—Lord Rivers was intrusted with several important embassies at the courts of Scotland, Burgundy, and Bretagne; and being smitten with the desire to visit foreign countries, he employed his leisure in travelling through Spain and Italy. He made a pilgrimage to the altar of St James of Compostella, and purchased a large indulgence from the holy see for the chapel of our Lady of Pisa, near St Stephen's, Westminster.

At the period of Edward the Fourth's decease, the youthful heir of his crown resided at Ludlow castle under the care of the earl of Rivers, and the queen proposed that her son should be instantly escorted to the metropolis by his uncle, at the head of a large body of troops; but the jealousy of Lord Hastings retarded this measure, and in the meantime Gloucester appeared on the stage, and entered on that deep game which involved the Wydevilles as its earliest victims. Rivers has been censured for allowing the young king to pursue his route to Stoney-Stratford while he himself lingered behind in Northampton until Gloucester arrived there. But it does not appear that the earl either meditated deserting the young prince, or suspected the treacherous designs of the duke: for the whole party, after having exchanged mutual assurances of friendship, sat down together to a festal banquet, after which Rivers retired to his lodgings without making an attempt to escape, and next morning he accompanied the duke to Stoney-Stratford, where they joined Edward and his train. Gloucester now threw off the mask, and suddenly accused Rivers and Gray of having attempted to misrepresent him to the king, his nephew; at the same time he caused the most confidential of the young king's servants to be laid under arrest, and ordered the rest of his retinue to disperse. Soon afterwards, the gallant Rivers was beheaded without form of trial. He perished in the forty-first year of his age. Walpole has justly said of him, that he was “as gallant as his luxurious brother-in-law, without his weaknesses; as brave as the heroes of either rose, without their savageness; studious in the intervals of business, and devout after the manner of those whimsical times, when men challenged others whom they never saw, and went barefoot to visit shrines in countries of which they had scarce a map.”

The literature of England is under deep obligations to this accomplished nobleman, who greatly enriched it by original and felicitous poetry and translations from the classics and from French authors. Hume says that he first introduced the noble art of printing into England; but this is evidently a mistake. He greatly patronised Caxton, however, and his ‘*Dietes and Sayinges of the Philosophers*’ is supposed to have been the second work produced in England by that printer. This translation was executed by the earl during his seclusion at Ludlow, while superintending the education of the prince, his nephew. The preface is written in a fine spirit, and cannot fail to interest the general reader as well as the student of our early literature. “Whereas,” says he, “it is so that, every humayn creature by the

sufferaunce of our Lord God is born and ordeyned to be subject and thralld unto the storms of fortune, and so in divers and many sundry wayes man is perplexed with worldly adversities, of the which, I, Antoine Wydeville, Erle Ryuers, Lord Scales, &c. have largely and in many different manner, have had my parte, and of him releived by the infinite grace and goodness of our said Lord, through the means of the mediation of mercy, which grace evidently to know and understood hath compelled me to set aparte all ingratitude, and droofe (drove) me by reson and conscience as far as my wretchedness would suffice to give therefore singular lovynges and thankes, and exhorted me to dispose my recovered lyf to his service, in following his lawes and commandements, and in satisfaction and recompense of mine iniquities and fawtes before donn, to seke and execute the workes that might be most acceptable to hym; and as far as my frailness would suffer me, I rested in the wyll and purpose during the season I understood the Jubylee and pardon to be at the holy appostle Seynt James in Spain, which was the year of grace, a thousand cccclxxiii. Thenne I determined me to take that voyage, and shipped from Southampton in the month of July in the said year, and so sayled from thence for a recreacyon, and passing of time I had delight, and used to read some good historye, and among other there was that person in my company, a worshipful gentleman called Louis de Breteylles, which greatly delighted him in all virtuous and honest things, that sayd to me he had there a book that he trusted I should like right well, and broughte it to me, which book I had never seen before, and is called 'The Sayynges and Dictes of Philosophers,' and as I understand it was translatyd out of Latin into French, by a worshipfull man called Messire Jehan de Teonville, Provost of Parys. When I had heeded and looked upon it as I had tyme and space, I gave thereto a very affection; and in special because of the holsom and swete saynges of the paynims which is a glorious fayre myrrour to all good Christian people to behold and understand; ever that a greate comforte to every well-disposed soul; it speaketh also universally to the example, weal, and doctrine of all kynges, princes, and to people of every estate. It lauds virtue and science, it blames vice and ignorance; and albeit as I could not at that season, no in all that pilgrimage time, have leisure to oversee it well at my pleasure, whilst for the dispositions that belongeth to a taker of jubylee and pardons, and also for the great acquaintance that I founde there of worshipful folkes, with whom it was fittinge that I should keepe good and honest company, yet nevertheless it rested still in the desirous favour of my minde, intending utterly to take these with greater acquaintance at some other convenient time, and so remaining in that oppynyon after such season as it listed the king's grace to commaunde me to give my attendance upon my lord the prince, and that I was in his service; when I had leisure I looked upon the said book, and at the last conclude in myself to translate it into the English tongue." The Earl Rivers also clothed the 'Morale Proverbes of Christine of Pisa' in an English dress. "In this translation," says Walpole, "the earl discovered new talents, turning the work into a poem of two hundred and three lines, the greatest part of which he contrived to make conclude with the letter E. an instance at
 * of his lordship's application, and of the bad taste of an age which

had witticisms and whims to struggle with as well as ignorance." Caxton, in enumerating the works of this nobleman, mentions a third translation from the French of 'The booke named Cordyale, or Memorable Novissime,' and 'over that divers balades against the seven dedely synnes.' But the most interesting of all the earl's productions are the stanzas which he composed in the prospect of his execution, when the harsh and unjust mandate of his oppressors was about to consign him to a dishonoured and premature grave. This ballad was printed in the first edition of this ill-fated nobleman's reliques from an imperfect copy preserved by Rous, the defects of which were afterwards supplied by the Fairfax manuscripts in the Sloanian collection. We shall here insert it entire for the gratification of the reader, although, as an illustration of English literature, it belongs properly to the literary section of the period now under consideration.

" Sumwhat mysynge
And more more nyng
In remembryng
The unстыdfastnesse.
This world beyng
Of such whelyng
The contrayinge
What may I guess ?

" I fear dowties
Remediles
Is now, to sese
My woeful chaunce
For unkyndnes
Withoutenless¹
And no redress
Me doth avaunce.²

" Wyth displeasaunce
To my grievance
And no surance
Of remedy.
So in this traunce
Now in substaunce
Such is my daunce
Willing to die.

" Methynkes truly
Boundyn am I
(And that gretly)
To be constant.
Seyng pleyntly
That fortune doth wry³
All contrary
From mine entent.

" My lyff was lent
Me on entent,
Hytt is nigh spent
Welcome fortune.
But I ne'er went⁴
Thus to be shent⁵
But so hytt ment
Such is her wonne.⁶

¹ To speak plainly.
² I never thought.

³ Urges on my fate.
⁵ Thus to be cut off.

⁴ Doth turn aside.
⁶ His custom.

Lord Hastings.

DIED A. D. 1483.

ONE of the most distinguished victims of the protector's ambition was the lord Hastings. The early and honoured friend of Edward IV. he had zealously asserted the rights of the young princes while Gloucester was plotting their destruction. This conduct marked him out for the victim of the man whom no considerations of blood, or justice, or humanity, ever turned aside from the pursuits of ambition and self-aggrandisement. As one of Edward's ministers, Hastings had exhibited a more than ordinary amount of talent, united to as great an amount of conscientiousness, perhaps, as the circle of the English court at the time exhibited. It is true that he accepted a pension of two thousand crowns from Louis XI. of France, the meaning of which could not be misunderstood; and that at the concluding of the treaty of Pecquigny, he received from the same monarch a gift of twelve dozen of gilt silver bowls, and twelve dozen not gilt, each of which weighed seventeen nobles; but then this was nothing more than a harmless compliance with the fashion of the times, and the English monarch was too needy and prodigal himself to forbid his favourites any means of making up to themselves what his own treasury could not yield them. Yet, in these corrupt transactions, Hastings showed "some glimmering of a sense of perverted and paradoxical humour." When Cleret, the medium of communication between the subtle monarch and the English ministers, hinted that some formal acknowledgment of the donation might be of use to him in his accountings with the king his master, Hastings gravely answered, "Sir, this gift cometh from the liberal pleasure of the king your master, and not from my request; if it be his determinate will that I should have it, put it into my sleeve; if not, return it; for neither he nor you shall have it to brag that the lord-chamberlain of England has been his pensioner."¹ Doubtless the lord-chamberlain felt himself to be a highly honourable and virtuous man, in thus refusing to give a receipt for a bribe which his sleeve at the same time gaped wide to receive; his less scrupulous companion accepted the money, and gave receipts for their several gratuities also, which still appear in the French archives; but posterity will probably admire the prudence more than the virtue of the lord-chamberlain in his dealings with paymaster Cleret. Handsome in person, and highly accomplished, Hastings soon made himself a prime auxiliary in Edward's profligate amusements; and in doing so, incurred the resentment of the queen, who justly suspected him of encouraging her husband's unbecoming gallantries.

In the expedition to France, Hastings bore a distinguished part, and was attended by a select body of gentlemen volunteers, who specially attached themselves to his service, and vowed "to aid and succour him so far forth as law, equity, and conscience, required." Supported by the general feeling in his favour, and at first an object neither of dread

¹ Holinshed, iii. 342.

nor dislike to the ambitious protector, Hastings might have stood his ground in the convulsions which followed Edward's death; but his jealousy and desertion of Rivers proved fatal to himself. He had been engaged in a personal quarrel with Rivers, which drew upon him the severe resentment of the king himself, and nearly endangered his life and estate. From this period he had nursed sentiments of revenge towards his accomplished rival, which the force of circumstances alone had prevented him from gratifying. Edward had seen and marked their animosity, and while on death-bed, had called them into his chamber, exhorted them to mutual forgiveness, and commanded them to embrace in his presence. They obeyed the royal mandate, and exchanged the external tokens of friendship, but the lapse of a few days sufficed to prove how hollow such reluctant professions of reconciliation were. When Elizabeth proposed in council that Rivers and Gray should conduct her young son from Ludlow to the metropolis, Hastings and his friends took alarm. They at once perceived that the command of an army would give the queen and the Wydevilles an immense advantage over their opponents. Where, they asked, was the necessity of an army? Who were the enemies against whom it was to be directed? Did the Wydevilles mean to break the reconciliation they had so recently sworn to observe? An angry altercation ensued: the queen eagerly insisting on the proposed arrangement, and Hastings as determinedly resisting it. At last he declared that he would quit the court and retire to his command at Calais, if the queen persisted in her intentions. Elizabeth fearing to provoke a formidable party at so critical a juncture, yielded, and those measures were adopted which, in the issue, placed the queen's party at the mercy of Gloucester.

The intelligence of the arrest of Rivers, was received by the lord-chamberlain with a burst of delusive joy. He was directed to communicate intelligence of Gloucester's proceedings at Northampton to the council, and accordingly sent information to the chancellor, Rotherham, archbishop of York. That prelate instantly waited upon the queen, now preparing to take refuge from the impending storm in the sanctuary of Westminster, and informed her that her son was in his uncle's hands; but exhorted her to take courage, for "that he was putte in good hope and out of feare by the message sente him from the lord-chamberlain." "Ah, woo worthe him!" exclaimed the queen, "for hee is one of them that laboureth to destroye me and my bloode."² For a time Hastings laboured to support Richard, with a blindness to his real designs amounting to fatuity. Lord Stanley told him that "he misliked these several councils" which Richard held with a private junto of his own, to which neither Hastings, Stanley, nor the archbishops of Canterbury and York, were ever invited; but the chamberlain laughed at his fears, and replied, "My lord, on my life never doute you, for while one man is there which is never thence, never can there be thinges ones minded that should sounde amisse towards me, but it should be in our eares ere it were well out of their mouths." In these words, Hastings alluded to Catesby, a lawyer who had risen to eminence under his patronage, and who was one of the duke's council at Crosby house, from whom he expected to learn all the secrets of that

² Sir Thomas More.

divan. But Catesby was playing a double and a false game, and was one of the first to betray his ancient patron to the duke. He told him of the warm and unshaken attachment which Hastings bore to the young princes, and from that moment the latter was a doomed man. Stanley again warned him of his danger under the similitude of a dream, afraid, perhaps, to trust even Hastings with a more open disclosure of the sentiments which he entertained regarding Richard. He sent a special messenger to him in the dead of the night, beseeching him to take horse instantly and flee from the city, for that he had just had a fearful vision, wherein a boar had attacked himself and his friend, and wounded both of them in the head with his tusks. Hastings could be at no loss to interpret Stanley's vision, for Richard's cognizance was a boar, yet with blind reliance on the duke's protestations, he laughed to scorn the timidity and visionary terrors of his friend, and desired him to give no credit to such vain phantasies, for he was as sure of the man to whom the vision pointed as of his own hand.* In the same morning on which Hastings had rejected the counsel thus conveyed to him, a friend of the protector waited upon him, desiring his presence in the council chamber. On their way thither, Hastings stopped to converse with an ecclesiastic of his acquaintance whom he happened to meet in the street, until his companion chided his delay, saying, "What, my lord, I pray you come on, whereto talke you so long with that priest, you have no need of a priest *yet*." Still the infatuated noble remained unconscious of danger, and hastened onwards to the place of meeting. Gloucester entered soon after the arrival of Hastings; his appearance struck the council with surprise and dismay, and they looked in silence at each other and him. His brow was contracted into a dark frown, and for a time he sat biting his lips in suppressed rage, until he suddenly broke silence by inquiring what punishment those persons merited who were now imagining and compassing his death. It was Hastings who first answered the question by exclaiming, that they should be dealt with as traitors. Gloucester then darkly hinted at his intended victims: "That sorceress, my brother's wife!" he exclaimed, plucking up his left sleeve, and exposing the lean and withered arm which it covered, and which was well known to have been a congenital deformity of his person. "Ye shall all see," he continued, "how that sorceress and that witch of her council, Shore's wife, have by their practices wasted my body." The accusation, absurd as it was, boded no good to Hastings, who, after Edward's death, had formed a connexion with his favourite mistress; yet he plucked up courage to reply: "Certainly, my lord, if they have so heinously done, they be worthy of heinous punishment." "What!" rejoined the protector, "dost thou answer me with ifs and ands? I tell thee they have done it, and that I will make good on thy body, traitor!" At these words he struck the table violently with his fist, whereupon, as if at a preconcerted signal, a voice at the door exclaimed 'Treason!' and a body of armed men instantly burst into the hall. Hastings and Stanley, with the prelates of York and Ely, were instantly arrested. The three latter were conveyed away to separate chambers, but Gloucester swore by St Paul, that he would not dine till Hastings' head was off, and commanded his vic-

* Sir Thomas More.

tim to hasten to confession. It was in vain that the unfortunate nobleman inquired what offence he had committed worthy of death, or even imprisonment; the mandate for instant execution was imperious, and none dared to interpose a plea for mercy. The nearest priest received the unhappy man's hurried confession, and a log of timber which lay in the yard at the door of the chapel, served for a block, on which the fatal blow was given. The same afternoon, a proclamation appeared, in which it was announced, that Hastings and his friends having conspired "the same day to have slain the lord-protector, and the duke of Buckingham, sitting in the council," had been, "by the help of God," resisted and overcome in the foul attempt. Then followed various animadversions on the late chamberlain's character and conduct as an evil counsellor to Edward IV., not omitting severe comments upon his known connexion with Jane Shore.⁴

Richard III.

DIED A. D. 1485.

RICHARD the Third has been, until of late years, the *ame damnée* of historians. They have heaped on his memory the darkest accusations,—imputed to him nearly every atrocious deed that was perpetrated during his public life,—and, to crown this fearful accumulation, they have described his form as foully distorted, and his features as expressive of the deep malignity of his soul. To these representations, the appalling impersonation of villanous hypocrisy to which Shakspeare attached the name of Richard has given a force and verisimilitude against which it appears almost hopeless to hold up a tamer, though truer limning. He has come down to the present day, as the assassin of Henry the Sixth and of his unfortunate son,—as the murderer of Clarence, and as the subtle specious schemer, whose object it was, even during the life of his crowned brother, to prepare a way to the throne, by the deliberate extinction of every life which stood between him and the 'royal chair.' For all and each of these charges, the evidence is of an exceedingly questionable character. That Henry was actually murdered, though probable, is not absolutely certain; but on the admission that his death was violent, there still does not appear any ground of substantial testimony for charging the act itself on the duke of Gloucester. That he assisted in the cold-blooded butchery of the youthful Edward of Lancaster is indeed affirmed by writers of repute; yet there is counter-evidence sufficient to throw doubt on the highly-coloured statement which makes princes and nobles the eager murderers of a defenceless boy. Of the death of Clarence, there are the strongest reasons for acquitting him; and it is far more probable that the king was urged on to fratricide by the apprehensions of the queen and her family. It is certainly possible that the bold measures by which he secured first the protectorate, and afterwards the crown, were the result of long premeditation and close intrigue; yet is there absolutely nothing in the way of proof that should lead to such a conclu-

⁴ Sir Thomas More

sion; and the balance of probabilities, as well as the peculiar features of the enterprise, would rather induce the belief, that whatever his ambition might have previously hoped, the overt-acts in which it first displayed itself were suggested and governed by the circumstances in which he found himself placed.

As crowned king, his administration was just and able. He affected magnificence after the fashion of his deceased brother, though without his fantastical exaggerations. His person and manners—for any thing that appears to the contrary—were pleasing and graceful, though his historians have been pleased to represent a shape, perhaps not altogether symmetrical, as a mere system of distortions, ‘rudely stamp’d,—cheated of feature,—deformed, unfinished,—scarce half made up.’ Early in his brief reign, he undertook a royal progress through the kingdom, for the purpose of redressing grievances, correcting abuses, and administering justice; but at York, where he had re-enacted the pompous pageant of his coronation, he was startled by menacing intelligence. The duke of Buckingham, Richard’s devoted partizan and bosom-counsellor through the entire business of the usurpation, had been made too powerful not to whisper to himself a hope that, in the scramble for dignities, it might fall to his chance to clutch a sceptre, and when that dream was dissipated by farther reflection, he plotted with the friends of the queen-dowager, to replace young Edward on the throne. But the murderous foresight of Richard had already marred that scheme; the two princes had perished in the tower, at the command of their uncle. Defeated in this plan, Buckingham put forward the earl of Richmond, afterward Henry VII., as the rightful claimant of the kingdom. Richard, brave and active, lost not an hour in hesitation; he immediately assembled troops, and issued a proclamation which, for its cool hypocrisy, may challenge competition. It was something new, even in those strange days, for a king to arraign the private morals of his enemies; yet did he in that marvellous document, in addition to the usual charges of faction and treason, think it worth his while, and worthy of his rank, to abuse his antagonists as ‘adulterers and bawds.’¹ His armament and his moral indignation were, however, alike uncalled for, since the event proved that Buckingham had miscalculated his means and opportunity. The elements traversed his intended enterprise; he started from Brecknock, but the Severn was in flood, and the bridges were broken down; his movements were watched, and his half-hearted followers disbanded. The simultaneous risings which were to have aided his efforts by calling off the attention of the royalists, were easily dispersed, and this ill-combined insurrection terminated in the public execution of Buckingham, and the flight of the other Lancastrian leaders to foreign shores. The king dealt sharply with his foes; such as came within his grasp he sent to the gibbet and the block; and a subservient parliament aided him in visiting the rest with confiscation and attainder. Richard took farther measures for the legitimization of his title, by procuring, under parliamentary forms, the annulment of his brother’s marriage with Elizabeth Grey, thus bastardising the issue of that union. Of this measure, it is not easy to discern the expediency; the young princes were dead, and this pertinacious recur-

¹ Rymer.

rence to the question of legitimacy, could but revive recollections of little advantage to the individual who had commanded their murder. In other quarters, his policy was wiser: he completed a pacific negotiation with Scotland, and intrigued at the court of Bretagne, where the earl of Richmond and his adherents had found an asylum, but whence they were compelled to withdraw by the subtle and successful machinations of Richard. But a domestic calamity, the death of his only son in April, 1484, gave him a farther opportunity of exercising his characteristic craft. He persuaded his brother's widow, whose children he had put to death, whose character he had aspersed, and whose rank he had taken away, to quit the sanctuary of Westminster, where she had so long found refuge, and with her daughters to appear at court. He even procured her consent to his marriage with her eldest daughter, and both these heartless and ambitious women were elated at the prospect of the unnatural alliance, though aware, it is to be feared, that it could not be effected without foul play to Richard's still living queen. But when the death, probably by poison, of his consort, had removed the main difficulty, the well-grounded remonstrances of his favourite advisers defeated the plan. The indignation of the nation at the marriage of uncle and niece,—the confirmation of the general suspicion that it had been preceded and prepared by a convenient murder,—with other important motives powerfully urged, prevailed on the king to abandon his design.

In the mean time, a threatening storm was gathering on the shores of France. Henry, earl of Richmond, had been acknowledged by all the exiles, and by the malcontents of England, as the heir of Lancaster; he had pledged himself to merge the conflicting claims of the two houses, by a marriage, in the event of success, with Elizabeth, the heiress of York, and thus blend the opposite rights; he was assembling troops under the auspices of the king of France, for the invasion of England. In July, 1485, he made good his landing at Milford-Haven; and when he reached Shrewsbury his army amounted to four thousand men, the greater part of whom were Normans. Richard moved on Leicester with a powerful array, but disaffection pervaded its ranks: his crimes had destroyed his chance of reigning, and when the armies faced each other on Bosworth field, he found, that while some of his soldiers were openly deserting him, the remainder were either wavering or obviously waiting the event. In this desperate situation, the king made one last personal effort for victory. Perceiving Richmond, surrounded by his officers, at no great distance, Richard charged at full speed upon Henry's guard, cut down his standard-bearer, unhorsed another knight, and was aiming a blow at his rival, who neither avoided nor advanced, when numbers rushed between, and the gallant usurper fell fiercely fighting in the *melee*.

It is not necessary to offer farther illustration of the character of Richard than has been already given. That he has been charged with crimes which he never committed, is more than probable, but when every deduction has been made, enough will remain to give him high rank among the worst men who have worn a crown. No means, however atrocious, of obtaining his ends, came amiss to him; poison or steel, blood or suffocation, craft or violence, were alike in the perpetrations of this sanguinary hypocrite. In bravery, subtilty, cold-blooded

cruelty and consummate hypocrisy, there is a striking resemblance between his character and that of Aurungzeeb.

II.—ECCLESIASTICAL SERIES.

Walter de Merton.

DIED A. D. 1277.

OF the personal history of this excellent bishop little is known. He was the son of William de Merton, archdeacon of Berks, and was born at Merton in Surrey, where also he obtained the rudiments of education in a monastical establishment. In the year 1239, he appears to have been in possession of the family estate, and also of one inherited from his mother, both his parents being now dead. In 1259, he held a prebend in Exeter cathedral, and Browne Willis says, that he was vicar of Potton, in Bedfordshire, at the time of his promotion to the see of Rochester. Other accounts say, that he was first canon of Salisbury, and afterwards rector of Stratton. The custom of the times permitted of his devoting his attention to the profession of the law, although in holy orders, and he appears to have exercised at one and the same time the functions of a divine, a lawyer, and a financier, and that with high credit and reputation. In the court of chancery he became king's clerk, and subsequently protonotary; and, in 1258, he was appointed to the highest judicial office in the kingdom. The barons, indeed, deprived him of the chancellorship in the same year in which it had been conferred on him, but he was restored to office in 1261, and held the seals again in 1274, before his consecration to the bishopric of Rochester. Throughout rather a long life, this prelate distinguished himself by the benevolence of his disposition, and the liberal patronage which he was ever ready to extend to men of letters. In 1261, he founded the hospital of St John for poor and infirm clergy; and soon afterwards he laid the foundation of the college which still bears his name in the university of Oxford. With regard to the latter institution, Wood and others state that the bishop confined his first attention to the erection and endowment of a school at Malden, which was to form a sort of nursery for the university; and that although he made provision for the support of the Malden scholars while attending Oxford, the establishment itself was not removed from Malden to Oxford until the year 1274, when its third and last charter was obtained. The successive charters of this establishment are still preserved in the library, and were consulted as precedents in the founding of Peterhouse, the earliest college of the sister-university. His preference of Oxford is explained by the fact of his having studied some time among the canons regular of Osseney, in the neighbourhood of Oxford. Merton died on the 27th of October, 1277. His death was occasioned by a fall from his horse in fording a river in his diocese. He was interred

in Rochester cathedral, where a beautiful alabaster monument was erected to his memory by the society of Merton college.

Archbishop Peckham.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1240.—DIED A. D. 1292.

JOHN PECKHAM, archbishop of Canterbury, in the reign of Edward I., was born in the county of Sussex about the year 1240. He received the rudiments of instruction in a monastery at Lewes, whence he was sent to Oxford, where his name occurs in the registers of Merton college. He was created doctor in divinity at this university, and read public lectures: Pitt says he was professor of divinity. He appears to have visited Paris twice, and to have read lectures in that city also with great applause. From Paris he journeyed to Lyons, where he was presented with a canonry in the cathedral of Lyons, which was held by the archbishops of Canterbury for two centuries after. He then went to Rome, where the pope appointed him palatine lecturer or reader.¹ In 1278, his holiness consecrated him archbishop of Canterbury, on his agreeing to pay 4,000 marks for the appointment. Peckham had nearly forgot his pledge in this instance, but the holy father failed not to remind him of it, and to accompany his message with a gentle hint at excommunication in the event of further delay or non-compliance.² Edward, who had not yet determined on breaking his peace with the court of Rome, received the new primate in peace, and, though he thwarted him at first in some things, seems to have at last reposed considerable confidence in him, for in 1282 he was sent in person to effect a reconciliation between the king and the prince of Wales, then at Snowdon, and threatening to concur with the oppressed Welsh in the defence of public liberty. Peckham was a man of considerable vigour and independence of mind; shortly after his appointment to the primacy, he held a provincial synod at Reading, in which several canons for the better regulation of the church, and especially for securing effect to its sentences of excommunication, were promulgated. In 1281, he held another council at Lambeth, in which several canons were enacted touching the administration of the eucharist. In the same year, he addressed a spirited remonstrance to the king in support of the rights and privileges of the clergy. In this document he complains that the church was grievously injured and oppressed by the civil power, contrary to the decrees of the popes, the canons of councils, and the authority of the orthodox fathers; "in which," says he, "there is the supreme authority, the supreme truth, and the supreme sanctity, and no end may be put to disputation unless we submit ourselves to these three great laws." He then goes on to protest, that no oaths which may ever be extorted from him shall constrain him to do any thing against the privileges and rights of the church, and offers to absolve the king from any oath he may have taken that can anywise incite him against the church. Edward, though he paid no heed to the primate's expostulations, allowed him to remain unmolested. In 1286,

¹ Leland.

² Dupin, xi. 72.

the archbishop signalized his orthodoxy and skill in scholastic divinity, by publicly censuring several propositions maintained by one Richard Knapwell, a Dominican friar. One of these was, "that, in articles of faith, a man is not bound to rest on the authority of the pope, or of any priest or doctor; but that the holy scriptures and right reason are the only foundations of our assent."³ It is singular that this noble proposition, on which the goodly superstructure of the reformation was afterwards reared, should have found a place among Knapwell's heretical propositions, which were all, with this one and splendid exception, too trifling and absurd to merit a moment's notice from any one but the lover of scholastic jargon.

Peckham died at Mortlake, in 1292, and was buried in Canterbury cathedral, near the remains of Thomas Becket. He was succeeded in the primacy by Robert Winchelsey, who is said to have been a prelate of great piety, and some learning, but who sat very uneasy in the archiepiscopal chair under the repeated attacks which Edward and his parliament made upon the wealth and immunities of the church.

Godwin represents Archbishop Peckham as a man of great state, who loved to surround himself with the external marks of authority and grandeur, but was easily accessible, and of a liberal and courteous disposition. He founded a college at Wingham in Kent; and Anthony Wood makes frequent mention of the services which he rendered to the university of Oxford. In some of his regulations for that place of learning, he shows his good sense in the censures which he has passed upon certain logical and grammatical *nugæ* which were then in high fashion among the schools; and he appears to have always been a zealous promoter of strict discipline and good morals. Tanner enumerates a great many of his theological tracts, which still remain, however, in manuscript in our public libraries, with the exception of a few of his letters which were published by Wharton, and his statutes and institutions which are inserted in the 'Concilia' of Wilkins.

Bishop Aungerbyle.

BORN A. D. 1281.—DIED A. D. 1345.

RICHARD AUNGERVYLE, commonly known by the name of RICHARD DE BURY, bishop of Durham, was born in 1281, at St Edmund's Bury, in Suffolk. He was educated at the university of Oxford, after which he entered into the order of Benedictine monks at Durham, and became tutor to Edward, prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward III. Upon the accession of his royal pupil to the throne, he was loaded with honours and emoluments, being first appointed cofferer, then treasurer of the wardrobe, archdean of Northampton, prebendary of Lincoln, Sarum, and Lichfield, keeper of the privy seal, dean of Wells,—and last of all, promoted to the bishopric of Durham in 1333. He likewise enjoyed the offices of lord-high-chancellor and treasurer of England, and discharged two important embassies at the court of France. Learned himself, and a patron of the learned, he maintained a corre-

³ Wykes, p. 114.—Spelm. conc. ii. 347.

spondence with some of the greatest geniuses of the age, particularly with the celebrated Petrarch. He was of a most humane and benevolent temper, and performed many signal acts of charity. Every week he caused eight quarters of wheat to be made into bread, and given to the poor; and whenever he travelled between Durham and Newcastle, he distributed £8 in alms; between Durham and Stockton, £5; between Durham and Auckland, 5 marks; and between Durham and Middleham, £5. He is said to have possessed more books than all the other bishops of England together, and founded a public library at Oxford for the use of the students, which he furnished with the best collection of books, especially Greek and Hebrew grammars, then in England, and appointed five keepers to whom he granted yearly salaries. At the dissolution of religious houses in the reign of Henry VIII., Durham college, where he had fixed the library, being dissolved among the rest, some of the books were removed to the public library, some to Baliol college, and some came into the hands of Dr George Owen, a physician of Godstow, who bought that college of King Edward VI. Bishop Aungervyle died at his manor of Auckland on the 24th of April, 1345, and was buried in the south part of the cross aisle of the cathedral church of Durham, to which he had been a benefactor. He wrote: 1st, 'Philobiblos,' a singular book, containing directions for the management of his library at Oxford, and a great deal in praise of learning, but in very bad Latin; 2d, 'Epistolæ Familiarium,' some of which are addressed to Petrarch; 3d, 'Orationes ad Principes,' mentioned by Bale and Pitts.

William of Wykeham.

BORN A. D. 1324.—DIED A. D. 1404.

WILLIAM of Wykeham, the illustrious founder of New college, Oxford, was born at Wykeham in Hampshire, in 1324. It is supposed that he took his surname from the place of his birth, as his father's name appears to have been Lange; or, according to others, Perrot. His parents were poor, and unable to afford their son a liberal education; but, in the person of Nicholas Uvedale, lord of the manor of Wykeham, the future bishop of Winchester, and chancellor of England, found a discerning and liberal patron; he sent him to Winchester school, and afterwards received him into his household in the capacity of secretary.

At the age of twenty-two or twenty-three, he appears to have obtained, probably through the influence of his generous patron, some kind of employment at court, but of what precise nature cannot now be ascertained. The first office which we know him to have held, was that of clerk of the king's works in his manors of Henle and Tes-hampstead. He held this office by patent in 1356, and soon afterwards was made surveyor of the works at Windsor, with an allowance of one shilling a-day. It was by the persuasion of Wykeham, that Edward was induced to pull down a great part of the royal castle at

¹ Spires, 1483, 4to.

Windsor, and reconstruct it in that style of magnificence to which it still owes its imposing grandeur. His other great work was Queensborough castle, in which he displayed great architectural skill in contending with the disadvantages of situation and other natural obstacles. Such a man was regarded as a valuable acquisition by a sovereign of Edward's magnificent taste; and accordingly we find preferments rapidly showered upon him from the royal hand. These were, indeed, of an ecclesiastical kind; but there is reason to believe that Wykeham had designed from the first to take church orders, and it is a strong confirmation of this presumption, that in all his early patents he is styled *clericus*. He was ordained priest by Edyngdon, bishop of Winchester; and, in 1357, was presented to the rectory of Pulham in Norfolk; but as the court of Rome started some difficulties against him, he was not put in possession of the rectorship until 1361. From this latter period, preferments flowed upon him, so that the annual value of his various livings, for some years before he became bishop of Winchester, amounted to £842. His liberality, however, kept pace with his increasing means. It is affirmed of him by Dr Lowth, that "he only received the revenues of the church with one hand, to expend them in her service with the other." Nor were his civil promotions less rapid and honourable. In 1360, he attended the king to Calais, and assisted at the ratification of the treaty of Bretagne. In 1362, he was made warden and justiciary of the king's forests on this side of Trent. On the 11th of May, 1364, he was appointed keeper of the privy seal, and two years afterwards, secretary to the king, and chief of the privy council. Such, indeed, was his influence, that Froissart, a contemporary historian, who was perfectly acquainted with the affairs of the English court, and at this time resident there, affirms that "every thing was done by this priest, and nothing was done without him."

On the 8th of October, 1366, Edyngdon, bishop of Winchester, died, and Wykeham, upon the king's earnest recommendation, was unanimously elected by the prior and convent his successor. It has been said that Wykeham, notwithstanding his promotion in the church, was an illiterate person, but the contrary incontestably appears from the pope's bull, constituting him administrator of the spiritualities and temporalities of the see of Winchester; for in this instrument his holiness speaks of Wykeham as having been specially recommended to him, "by the testimony of many persons worthy of credit, for his knowledge of letters, his probity of life and manners, and his prudence and circumspection in affairs both spiritual and temporal:" nor are we to regard these as mere words of course, for they are rather a departure from the official language of such documents at the time, and it is not likely that even the court of Rome would choose to depart from a common form to compliment a person for the very quality in which he was notoriously deficient. His advancement to the bishopric was followed by his being appointed chancellor of England on the 17th of September, 1367. In this high office, he judiciously laid aside the style of oratory usually adopted by his clerical predecessors, and which savoured more of the pulpit than the bench, for one of a more political and popular cast. He held the chancellorship for four years, and when the king yielded to the request of his parliament, that only secular persons should be appointed to the high offices of state, he frankly, and without

any expression of chagrin, resigned the great seal to his successor, Sir Robert de Thorp. He still, however, continued the principal adviser and confidant of the king; and his influence was so generally understood, that Gregory XI. wrote to him to facilitate an accommodation between Edward and the king of France.

Soon after his being settled in the bishopric of Winchester, he began to gratify his architectural taste in the repairing of his cathedral, the whole expense of which was defrayed by himself. The care he bestowed in other parts of his episcopal duty, in reforming abuses, and establishing discipline, was equally exemplary, and involved him in a series of disputes with the idle and refractory clergy, in which he conducted himself with admirable firmness, judgment, and integrity. The foundation of a college, or of some institution for the promotion of learning and the instruction of youth, appears to have been, from an early period, a favourite design of Wykeham's. About two years after his entrance on the bishopric, he began to make purchases in the city of Oxford with that view, and he connected with his plans there the design of another college at Winchester, which should be a nursery for that of Oxford. "The plan he conceived," as stated by Lowth, "was no less than to provide for the perpetual maintenance and instruction of two hundred scholars, to afford them a liberal support, and to lead them through an entire course of education from the first elements of letters through the whole circle of the sciences, from the lowest class of grammatical learning to the highest degrees in the several faculties. It consisted of two parts, rightly forming two establishments, the one subordinate to the other. The design of the one was to lay the foundation, that of the other to raise and complete the superstructure; the former was to supply the latter with proper subjects, and the latter was to improve the advantages received in the former." The regulations by which the new institution at Oxford was to be governed, afford some useful information on the studies of the university, and on the mode in which they were classed. The establishment, according to Wood, consisted of a warden, seventy clerical scholars, ten chaplains, three clerks, and sixteen choristers. Ten of the scholars were to study the civil, and ten the canon law, while the remaining fifty were to study divinity, general philosophy, and the arts, two of the number being allowed to study medicine, and two astronomy. The building was ready for the reception of the society early in the spring of 1386, and the feelings of the time are shown by the account given of the solemnities which attended the entry of the warden and fellows into the college. On the 14th of April, and at three o'clock in the morning, they proceeded in procession to the gates chaunting the litanies, and offering up the most devout prayers to God that he would bless them and their studies. "Thus," says the historian, "was this noble work finished and completed by the bounty of the thrice worthy and never too much to be admired prelate; not so much for the eternizing of his own name, but chiefly for the public good, that the holy writ and all other sciences might the freer be dilated; that Christ might be preached, and the true worship of him augmented and sustained; that the number of clerks might be increased, which were before swept away by pestilences and other miseries of the world."¹ There is reason to

¹ Vol. iii. 183.

believe that some portion of the good which the bishop is thus supposed to have had in view by the foundation of his establishments, resulted from his benevolence, and we may regard the imitation of his example by several persons of rank in subsequent years, as one of the most important aids which learning at this period received. The importance of the part which the universities of Oxford and Cambridge took in those times will be the better appreciated when it is considered that during the reigns of both Richard the Second and Henry the Fourth, learning required all the protection they could afford it, and that without the strong barrier they opposed to the political evils which were on the point of overwhelming the land that had been won from the waste, truth and genius would have again ceased their labours in despair.

The influence of the duke of Lancaster and of Alice Perrers, was successfully excited against Wykeham during Henry's dotage, and exposed him to many troubles; but on the accession of Richard II., Wykeham was again intrusted with the great seal, and by his prudent conduct amid the multiplied embarrassments of that reign, secured to himself the confidence not only of his royal master, but of the commons also. His foresight and caution, however, induced him to make a voluntary surrender of the seals in 1391, and to retire as completely as possible from political life. From this period he confined his attention almost exclusively to the affairs of his bishopric, and his favourite foundation at Oxford. He died on the 27th of September, 1404, and was interred in his own beautiful chantry in Winchester cathedral.

John Wickliffe.

BORN A. D. 1324.—DIED A. D. 1384.



JOHN WICKLIFFE was born about the year 1324, in a village on the banks of the Tees, near Richmond, in Yorkshire. Of his parentage and earlier years little is known. History first presents him to us as a student in Queen's college, Oxford, and subsequently in Merton college, where, by the hard exercise of considerable talents, he became a respectable scholar. Having mastered Aristotle, he applied himself vigorously to the study of the scholastic theology of the day, and soon attained unrivalled skill in the puzzling jargon and subtle casuistry of the schoolmen,—a circumstance which eminently qualified him for the part he was afterwards to act against the errors and subtleties of Romanism. He then applied himself with equal assiduity to the study of the civil and canon law and the Latin fathers; and finally betook himself to the diligent investigation of the fountains of sacred truths in the holy scriptures themselves. So profound and splendid were his varied acquirements soon esteemed to be, that his contemporaries bestowed on him the honourable appellation of 'the Gospel-doctor.'

It was not till the year 1360, that Wickliffe was called to exhibit either his talents or his tenets, both of which were now displayed in defence of his university against the encroachments of the mendicant monks. Oxford in its earlier days, is reported to have often number-

ed within its walls upwards of thirty thousand students. But this mighty army had been reduced to six thousand by the misconduct of the monks. "These religious," says Gilpin, "from the time of their first settlement in Oxford—which was in the year 1230—had been very troublesome neighbours to the university. They set up a different interest, aimed at a distinct jurisdiction, fomented feuds between the scholars and their superiors, and in many respects became such offensive inmates, that the university was obliged to curb their licentiousness by severe statutes. This insolent behaviour on one side, and the opposition it met with on the other, laid the foundation of an endless quarrel. The friars appealed to the pope, the scholars to the civil power; and sometimes one party and sometimes the other prevailed. Thus, the cause became general; and an opposition to the friars was looked upon as the test of a young fellow's affection to the university. It happened, while things were in this situation, that the friars had got among them a notion of which they were exceedingly fond; that Christ was a common beggar; that his disciples were beggars also; and that begging, by their example, was of gospel institution. This notion they propagated with great zeal from all the pulpits, both in Oxford and the neighbourhood to which they had access. Wickliffe—who had long held these religious in great contempt for the laziness of their lives—thought he had now found a fair occasion to expose them. He drew up, therefore, and presently published a treatise 'Against able beggary,' in which he first showed the difference between the poverty of Christ and that of the friars, and the obligations which all Christians lay under to labour in some way for the good of society. He then lashed the friars with great acrimony, proving them to be an infamous and useless set of men, wallowing in luxury, and so far from being objects of charity, that they were a reproach not only to religion but even to human society. This piece was calculated for the many, on whom it made a great impression; at the same time it increased his reputation with the learned, all men of sense and freedom admiring the work, and applauding the spirit of the author. From this time, the university began to consider him as one of her first champions; and in consequence of the reputation he had gained, he was soon afterwards promoted to the mastership of Baliol college." Archbishop Islip subsequently conferred the wardenship of Canterbury hall upon Wickliffe, styling him in his letters of institution, "a person in whose fidelity, circumspection, and industry, he very much confided." The succession of Simon Langham to the archiepiscopal dignity, led to the ejection of Wickliffe, in 1367, from his wardenship; but such was the attachment of the secular scholars to him, that they refused to obey his successor in office, and were only reduced to silence by a bull from Rome.

Wickliffe's next appearance as a controversialist was on behalf of his sovereign Edward III., against the claims put forth by the papal chair. Urban had threatened to cite the king of England before his court at Rome, for non-payment of the tribute which his predecessor, John, had bound himself to pay the holy see. Edward had laid the matter before his parliament, and that assembly had unanimously declared that King John could not, of his own power and authority, subject his kingdom to a foreign power, and that consequently they would support their

sovereign in his resistance to the pope's pretensions. The pope found advocates of his claims, however: of these, one in particular, a monk, profound, subtle, and eloquent, put forth a treatise, which produced on the public mind a strong impression against the king. Wickliffe sat down to pen an answer to this work, and, bringing to his task equal talents, with the auxiliaries of common sense and sacred scripture, completely overwhelmed his antagonist. This brought him into more notice, and procured for him the patronage of government. In 1372, he was elected professor of divinity at Oxford, and thus placed on the summit of an eminence, whence, in all directions, he could pour streams of gospel light into the surrounding darkness. The appearance of such a man in such a place was as novel and startling as that of a burning citadel on the brow of a promontory at the hour of midnight, and nearly as astounding and universal was the alarm and excitement produced by it. The glory of the scholastic theology had now reached its acme. The schoolmen, infatuated by the perverted philosophy of Aristotle, were busy perplexing truth instead of elucidating it, and pertinaciously pursuing the most frivolous inquiries under the title of learning, to the utter extinction of all piety and all peace. While such themes were the subject of meditation in the cloister, and of prelection in the academic chair, what was to be expected from the pulpit but kindred disquisitions equally impious and useless? These were intermingled with the dreams of the fathers and the traditions of the church, with false miracles and legendary tales, as destitute of truth as repugnant to common sense. The former satisfied the educated and metaphysical; the latter gratified the passion of the wonder-loving multitude; and thus the delusions of Romanism were fostered, and the interests of the monastic orders advanced with the public. In this state of things, if Wickliffe's situation was advantageous, it was also eminently critical; and at the commencement of his career there was need of consummate prudence. Aware that established customs, old feelings, and deep-rooted prejudices, were not to be at once assailed and overturned, he was contented at first with frequently treating his audiences to logical and metaphysical disputations, thus accustoming them to hear novelties of doctrine propounded, and ancient opinions controverted. As nothing was admired in the schools but discussions on time, space, substance, identity, and such like themes, Wickliffe at first expatiated only on these; but with his prelections on such unedifying topics, he gradually intermixed and pushed as far as was consistent with prudence his new opinions in divinity, sounding as it were the minds of his hearers, till, at length, finding the water of sufficient depth, and hourly increasing, he set every sail, and scudded fearlessly along before the breeze of truth and reason, steering constantly by the compass of revelation. His celebrity soon attracted a vast concourse of students, and his opinions were gradually, though silently, imbibed by a host of pupils. Nor was he less admired in the pulpit than in the schools. He amused not the learned among his auditors with the subtleties of scholastic disputation, nor the vulgar with panegyrics on saints, and accounts of miracles. The doctrines of religion, as far as it was then safe to promulgate them, and the duties of the christian life, he at all times seriously enforced upon his audience: but when fitting opportunity offered, he failed not to denounce the corruptions of the church, the profligacy

of the clergy, and the usurpations of the pope, with a force of argument which flashed conviction on every unprejudiced mind, and with a warmth and vehemence, such as to show that he understood his ground. The result of all this was, that he soon acquired a vast multitude of adherents of all ranks, and stood forth in the public eye the most prominent object of the day for esteem or hatred.

In 1374, the crown, mindful of past obligations, not only conferred on Wickliffe a valuable benefice, but employed him on an embassy to the pope concerning the liberties of the church of England. We soon afterwards find him again employed in a diplomatic character, being delegated with several barons to the court of the duke of Milan. His intercourse with the authorities of the pontificate supplied him with a more intimate knowledge of its projects and policy, nor was he slow in availing himself of it, for, from this period, in his lectures and pulpit discourses, we find him pouring forth fiery invectives against the abuses of popery. He reproveth in the harshest language the profligate lives of the clergy, and impugns with all freedom the unscriptural doctrines which they inculcated; he upbraids them with ignorance, hypocrisy, and cunning selfishness, and even the pope himself fails not to receive his censures. Correction is always grievous to him that forsaketh the way; this holds true, even when the phrase of reproof is most mild and measured; how much more so when censure is conveyed in such acrimonious language, as Wickliffe, in his honest indignation, used towards his opponents. The mingled cries of interest and ignorance and bigotry rent the air, flew across the seas, and entered the ears of his holiness, while malice extracted from his lectures and writings no fewer than nineteen charges of heresy which were immediately exhibited against him. These were: That there is one only universal church, which is the university (or entire member) of the predestinate. Paul was never a member of the devil, although (before his conversion) he did certain acts like unto the acts of the church malignant. The reprobate are not parts of the (invisible) church, for that no part of the same finally falleth from her, because the charity (or grace) of predestination, which bindeth the church together, never faileth. The reprobate, although he be sometimes in grace, according to present justice (that is, by a present appearance of outward righteousness) yet is he never a part of the holy church (in reality) and the predestinate is ever a member of the church, although sometimes he fall from grace *adventitiâ*, but not from the grace of predestination: even taking the church for the convocation of the predestinate, whether they be in grace or not, according to present justice, (that is, whether they be converted already, or yet remain to be so, the predestinate or elect constitute as such, that invisible church which God the Father hath chosen, and God the Son redeemed). The grace of predestination is the bond wherewith the body of the church, and every member of the same, is indissolubly joined to Christ their head. That the eucharist, after consecration, was not the real body of Christ, but only an emblem or sign of it. That the church of Rome was no more the head of the universal church than any other church, and that St Peter had no greater authority given him than the rest of the apostles. That the pope had no more jurisdiction in the exercise of the keys than any other priest. That if the church misbehaved, it was not only lawful but meritorious to dispossess her of her temporalities.

That when a prince, or temporal lord, was convinced that the church made an ill use of her endowments, he was bound, under pain of damnation, to take them away. That the gospel was sufficient to direct a Christian in the conduct of his life. That neither the pope nor any other prelate ought to have prisons for the punishing offenders against the discipline of the church, but that every person ought to be left at his liberty in the conduct of his life.¹

The pope, burning with desire to overwhelm so formidable an innovator, issued his mandate to the bishops of London and Canterbury, commanding them to apprehend and imprison Wickliffe until further orders as to his disposal should arrive from Rome. But the king, now advanced in years, having consigned the management of affairs to the duke of Lancaster, that nobleman is supposed to have embraced his religious views, and at all events effectually shielded him from persecution. Many of the nobility and gentry also espoused his party. Among these were Lord Henry Percy, John de Montacute, Sir Lewis Clifford, Sir John Pecke, Sir William Nevyle, Sir Thomas Latimer, Sir Richard Sturie, Sir John Oldcastle, Sir Thomas Trussell, Sir Reginald de Hylton, and the poets Chaucer and Gower. At this time Wickliffe styled himself '*peculiaris regis clericus*,' but had not openly departed from the Roman church. The pope sent his nuncio to Oxford to accuse the university of coldness in the cause of the church; and enjoining that body, under the severest penalties, to deliver up their divinity professor to the bishops of London and Canterbury. But such was the attachment of the university to Wickliffe, that they hesitated about receiving the nuncio at all; and if he was received—which is doubtful—his injunctions were utterly disregarded.

Wickliffe was now cited to appear before the bishops at St Paul's within thirty days. But betwixt the issuing of this summons and the day of appearance, the important question was agitated in parliament, whether or not on any emergency the pecuniary impositions of the pope might be lawfully disobeyed. On this very simple point there were various opinions, and it was at length agreed to refer the matter to Wickliffe who was deemed the best casuist of his time. This was a trying hour. The fires of persecution had begun to rage, and the papal thunders to war around him. Should he decide in favour of government, this would incense the papacy, and heat the furnace of their wrath seven times more than formerly; if again he decided in favour of the pope, this was to incur the displeasure of the throne, and deprive him of the royal protection. In these circumstances Wickliffe might well have paused and hesitated, but he flinched not, and calmly resolved the question in the affirmative, offering to prove it on the principles of the law of Christ. This affair rendered him much more odious to the court of Rome than all his former heresies; but the day was at hand which was expected to seal his doom.

On the day appointed for his appearance before the bishops, Wickliffe, accompanied by the duke of Lancaster, and Lord Percy, earl marshal of England, presented himself at St Paul's. The bishops were confounded at seeing him enter supported by the two greatest personages in the realm; and the metropolitan prelate, losing his temper,

¹ See Middleton's Biog. Evang.

suffered himself to be led into violent altercation with the duke of Lancaster. The trial never came on; for the vast concourse assembled within and without the building joined in the altercation, and the whole became a scene of uproar and confusion.² At last the meeting dispersed, and Wickliffe was anew summoned to meet the bishops at Lambeth. Here his enemies were again disappointed; for they had no sooner met, than Sir Lewis Clifford entered the assembly, and, in an authoritative tone commanded them to desist from proceeding to any decision against Wickliffe. The menace of Sir Lewis meant more than met the ear, and Wickliffe was again dismissed with an injunction to broach his heresies no more either in the schools or in the pulpit. He made no promises, however, and that he purposed no obedience was evinced by his future conduct.

Gregory XI. dying in 1378, a new pope was elected, who conducted himself with such insufferable arrogance that he lost the affection of his subjects, and disgusted the cardinals, which led to the election of a rival pope. These two infallibles contended for power with the most indecent violence; they called each other liars, and pronounced against each other the sentence of excommunication. Wickliffe was not asleep the while, but viewed the fight of the holy fathers as an omen for good: and while they were labouring each to prove the other an usurper and impostor, he was doing his best to prove that such was the true character of both. His zeal and talents were alike roused, and he sent forth into the world two tracts entitled 'The Schism of the Roman Pontiffs,' and 'The Truth of Scripture.' In the latter of these publications he contended for the translation of the word of God into the vernacular tongues, and insisted on the sufficiency of the Bible as a directory in doctrine and discipline. Soon after this, he was taken very ill, and fears were entertained lest his disease should prove fatal,—a catastrophe anxiously hoped for by the monks, who also cherished an expectation, that in these sorrowful circumstances he might be induced to revoke what he had written against them, and what had brought them into such contempt. To solicit this, a solemn deputation, consisting of a friar from each of the mendicant orders, was sent to him. Being admitted into his presence, they declared their object, and were listened to in silence; he then ordered his attendants to raise him from his pillow, and with a severe countenance indicative of vast energy of purpose, and in a firm tone, though erewhile so feeble, exclaimed, "I shall not die but live, and farther declare the evil deeds of the friars!" The deputation retired in confusion; and Wickliffe, as soon as he recovered, set about his promised work of reformation.

He uniformly acted on a system wisely planned and vigorously pursued. He saw that the want of a version of the Scriptures in the vernacular tongue was a source of the most serious evils, and in order to supply such a desideratum, he had from an early period been labouring to effect a translation. When the Scriptures were first rendered into Latin, it was the universal language of the western world, and as such proved an admirable vehicle of conveyance for religious truth; but in time it ceased to be spoken, and was superseded by a variety of dialects, possessing some more, some less affinity to it. Latin

² Fuller.

was no longer acquired on the breast and in the nursery, but, to be learned, needed to be formally studied. The Bible became thenceforth a sealed book to the multitude, and was understood only by the clergy, to whom the people owed any glimpse which they possessed of its meaning and doctrines, and who might impart, or withhold and gloss and modify at pleasure.

Wickliffe wished to reduce the priests to the capacity of mere expounders of God's law, and to enable the people to judge for themselves. This he deemed the likeliest way to erect an effectual barrier against the progress of that baleful stream, which rolling over the world overwhelmed and destroyed every vestige of Apostolic Christianity both in doctrine and practice. In order to prepare the world for the translation of the divine volume, which he had finished, he expatiated in his writings and sermons on the duty and right of the people to read the Scriptures, and reprimanded their spiritual guardians for shutting up these wells of living water. Having used every means that his bold and prolific genius could suggest, or his restless industry effect, to inspire the nation with a desire to read this inestimable volume, in the year 1380 he published his translation of both Testaments. This was the heaviest calamity—the most dismal omen that had ever befallen the Romish polity; it was the first spark of a conflagration destined to consume the whole citadel of Romish corruption and error. It is generally supposed that Wickliffe's was the first translation of the whole Scriptures, though some maintain that Richard Fitz-Ralph, archbishop of Armagh, and others that John de Trevisa, a Cornish man, both of whom lived in the reign of Edward III., had already achieved this noble undertaking. It is at least certain that they had commenced to do so, and had in part performed the task. A Saxon version of the Psalms had also been executed by our great Alfred, and the venerable Bede is supposed to have rendered the entire Scriptures into that language. But, however this may have been, the version of Wickliffe superseded that of his predecessors, and was the only one in use until the invention of printing and the revival of letters, when Tindale prepared and published that edition in the English language which cost him his life at the stake. Wickliffe executed his version from the vulgate, not that he regarded it as of equal authority with the Hebrew and Greek copies of the Scriptures, but because he did not understand these languages well enough to translate from them.³

The sword of Wickliffe was now drawn, he had burst the toils of priestcraft, and, rushing into the arena of combat, summoned the world to attend the decision. The forces of the court of Rome were also put in motion. The thunders of the pontiff shook the seven hills, and extended their hoarse murmurs to the British shores; but the reformer was no longer to be dismayed by the vain anathemas of Rome, though these erewhile and even then had made thrones totter and monarchs

³ Of this translation several manuscript copies are extant in our public libraries. Wickliffe's New Testament was published in folio, in 1731, by the Rev. John Lewis. It has also been republished by Mr Baber of the British Museum. The following three verses of the 8th chapter of the Romans may serve as a specimen of this version: "And we witen, that to men that louen God alle thing is worchen to gidre into good to hem that afir purpose been clepid seyntis. For thilke that he knew bifore, he bifore ordeynede bi grace to be maad lyk to the ymage of his Sone, that he, be the firste bigeten among manye britheren. And thilke that he bifore ordeynede to blisse, hem he clipede, and whiche he clipede hem he justifiede, and which he justifiede, and hem he glorified."

tremble. Amid the terrible menaces of the prelates, and the foul abuse of the inferior clergy, he went on unmoved, safe under the protection of heaven, and happy under the approbation of a good conscience. Having proved the power and temper of the weapon which he now wielded, he proceeded to apply it to the dogmas of the infallible church. His first stroke was at a doctrine, at once the most repugnant to reason and the most revered by the Romanists—transubstantiation. This supreme absurdity was begotten by a French monk in the ninth century, and introduced into England about the middle of the eleventh. Ignorance favoured its progress, and the clergy, eager to embrace whatever tended to promote their advantage, laid hold on this tenet as one calculated to inspire unbounded reverence for them by exalting the people's notions of their spiritual power. Accordingly, its adoption became general, and it was at length ratified in the thirteenth century by the third Lateran council. Wickliffe first opposed it in his lectures at Oxford, and afterwards published his sentiments under the title of 'Sixteen Conclusions,' which he offered to defend publicly in that school of learning. The chancellor, however, opposed this, knowing that no man was equal to Wickliffe's disputation, and fearing lest a triumph might increase his party, and give a still wider currency to his opinions. He persuaded twelve doctors of the university to join him in signing a programme, whereby academic members were prohibited from holding or defending the same doctrines with Wickliffe under pain of imprisonment and suspension. This was a short and easy method of refutation, but the reformer was not to be thus silenced, he appealed to his old friends, the parliament, but the king having no farther immediate need of his services, and regardless of the progress of truth when his own power was secure, refused to interfere; and Lancaster now told him, that in such things he should submit to his superiors. While he laboured to emancipate government from the political thralldom by which the pontiff had oppressed it, Wickliffe was hailed, and praised, and rewarded; but when he began to knock off the spiritual fetters of his fellow men, and to deliver them from the direst bondage, he found himself alone.

The hierarchy now ventured again to summon him before an ecclesiastical court. He appeared at Oxford on the appointed day, and before the bishops and doctors read his extorted confession. The majority appeared satisfied with his explanation, and the court was obliged to dismiss him without censure; but the wily chancellor and some of the monks considered the confession rather as a vindication than a recantation of sentiments—and so it really was. They, therefore, singly and daily assailed him with mock arguments and real abuse; but, in the midst of all opposition, he persevered in his purpose, and had the satisfaction to behold his followers daily multiplying throughout the kingdom. Such was the progress of truth, that even popish writers confessed, that half the people were Lollards and half Wickliffites. The Catholics raged and wondered; Wickliffe held his peace, and laboured on, till his success waxed beyond endurance, and Archbishop Courtney, a man entirely devoted to the interests of the Romish see, put forth his arm to crush the reformer. He brought a bill into parliament, the object of which was to arrest and imprison all venders of

heresy during the pleasure of the holy church.⁴ This bill passed the house of lords, but it was rejected by the commons. The primate now applied to Richard II. for letters patent, addressed to the chancellor of Oxford, commanding him to banish Wickliffe and his disciples from the university. The chancellor refused to execute the order, assigning as the reason, that he would thereby endanger his own life and the peace of the university; but the primate was not to be baffled, and became loud and peremptory. Wickliffe saw the storm gathering, and to avoid it, quitted Oxford for ever, and retired to his rectory of Lutterworth, where he continued to preach and to defend his opinions. It was doubtless to this champion of truth a moment of exquisite anguish, when he took a final farewell of those schools, the most renowned in the world, over which he had presided with unrivalled distinction, and wherein with unshackled boldness he had expounded the doctrines of wisdom.

The contest of the popes was still raging. Urban VI. was resolved to try a more substantial mode of warfare than had yet been adopted, and bring the quarrel to an issue by force of arms. Urban applied to England for men and money; and to all who in any way abetted his cause, there was granted the utmost profusion of indulgencies and pardons. The honest heart of Wickliffe could not conceal its horror and indignation at such a procedure. He denounced the pope in terms of the most unmeasured disgust and abhorrence, as the enemy of all good, declaring both the popes two false priests, open antichrists. "Why," he asks, "will not the proud priest of Rome grant full pardon to all men to live in love and peace, as he does to all such as fight and slay those who never offended him?" By this the wrath of the pope was excited to the uttermost, and he summoned the bold disturber to Rome to answer for his misdemeanors. He wrote the pope, pleading his health as one excuse for non-appearance, having been recently attacked by palsy, but informing his holiness at the same time, that "Christ taught him more obeish to God than to man." This seems by his holiness to have been received as glad tidings, and viewing it as a presage of mortality, his terrors were somewhat abated. It was hoped that he, whom nothing else could quiet, would soon be silenced by death, and henceforth the veteran polemic was permitted to live and labour with comparatively little molestation.

About two years after this, he was a second time attacked with palsy in December 1384, while attending divine service with his people at Lutterworth, and after an illness of three days he expired.⁵ He was buried in the chancel of his church, where his ashes reposed, till the hand of violence disturbed their peace. This shocking violation took place in consequence of a decree of the council of Constance in 1415, when, after the condemnation of 45 articles, relative to his doctrines, the reformer himself was pronounced to have died an obstinate heretic, and his bones were ordered to be dug up that they might be separated from the ashes of the faithful, and cast upon a dunghill. Accordingly, they were disinterred, burnt, and thrown into the Swift, a streamlet which runs by Lutterworth. Thus died honest John Wickliffe, a man who loved truth, who sought and found it, and gave himself up to its

⁴ Rot. Parl. iii. 184.

⁵ Wood.

guidance ; who feared God but not man, and pursued his Master's glory but not his own. Wickliffe was the Daniel of his era,—he dared to be singular, and to offend even to exasperation a power the most dreadful and overwhelming and implacable that then existed. He stood almost alone on the earth ; unimpressed by the example, and unawed by the execrations of adoring millions, he indignantly refused to fall down before the idol. He appears to have been a man at once amiable and ardent—bold and cautious—a lover of civil and sacred freedom, yet one who rebuked every species of licentiousness with the freedom and severity of an apostle. In his doctrinal opinions, he held all the points afterwards maintained by Calvinists against Arminians. In the matter of church government, his views strictly corresponded with those of the Congregationalists. To the Romish hierarchy, Wickliffe was more mischievous when dead than while alive. His books conferred on him a spiritual omnipresence, for by those he spoke at once in a multitude of places, and to tens of thousands. When the Romanists could do no more, they bestowed an epitaph on their arch-opponent. This singular article was expressed as follows :—"The devil's instrument, church's enemy, people's confusion, heretic's idol, hypocrite's mirror, schism's broacher, hatred's sower, lie's forger, flattery's sink—who, at his death, despaired like Cain, and stricken by the terrible judgment of God, breathed forth his wicked soul to the dark mansion of the black devil !"

Archbishop Courtney.

BORN A. D. 1341.—DIED A. D. 1396.

WILLIAM COURTNEY, archbishop of Canterbury, in the reign of Richard II., was the fourth son of Hugh Courtney, earl of Devonshire, by Margaret, daughter of Bohun, earl of Hereford. He was born in the year 1341, and received education at Oxford, where he applied himself with singular diligence and success to the study of the civil and canon law. On entering into holy orders, he soon obtained no fewer than three distinct prebends, and in 1369, he was promoted to the see of Hereford, from which he was translated, in 1375, to that of London. In a synod held at London in 1376, Bishop Courtney distinguished himself by his strenuous opposition to the king's demand of a new subsidy ; and soon after he incurred the censure of the high court of chancery for having presumed to publish a bull of the pope without the king's consent. In the last year of Edward III., he undertook, with the assistance of Archbishop Sudbury, to investigate into the new heresies then propagated by Wickliffe. The result of this interference, we have already noticed in our sketch of the intrepid reformer himself.

In 1381, Courtney was appointed lord-high-chancellor of England, and the same year was elevated to the see of Canterbury on the death of Sudbury. One of his earliest measures, as primate, was to call a synod of divines, in which four-and-twenty opinions zealously inculcated by the new preachers were censured : ten as heretical, fourteen as erroneous and of dangerous tendency. It chanced, that just as the synod

were about to enter on business, an earthquake shook the building in which they were assembled, whereupon some of the prelates flung down their papers, and crying out that the business upon which they were assembled was evidently displeasing to God, resolved to proceed no further in the matter. "The archbishop alone," says Gilpin, "remained unmoved; with equal spirit and address, he chid their superstitious fears, and told them, that if the earthquake portended any thing, it portended the downfall of heresy; that as noxious vapours are lodged in the bowels of the earth, and are expelled by these violent concussions, so by their strenuous endeavours, the kingdom should be purified from the pestilential taint of heresy which had infected it in every part." Wickliffe's partisans drew an opposite augury from the omen. "The erth tremblide," he writes, "for they put an heresie on Crist and the sayntes in hevyne;" but the anecdote sufficiently illustrates the courage and superior firmness of the archbishop.

In 1392, in a parliament held at Winchester, Courtney, who was probably suspected of privately abetting the papal encroachments, presented an answer to certain articles which had been exhibited by the commons in relation to the pope's pretensions. Soon after this, he obtained from the pope a grant of fourpence in the pound on all ecclesiastical benefices, but the collection of this impost was stoutly opposed by the bishop of Lincoln, and ere the matter could be decided, the archbishop died on the 31st of July, 1396. He was buried at Maidstone in Kent where he had founded a college of secular priests. Courtney appears to have been a staunch adherent of the court of Rome,—bold yet politic; in some instances he exhibited considerable strength of mind and liberality of views. In the parliamentary history some notice is taken of the speech which, as chancellor of England, he delivered at the opening of the parliament, in 1382. It is a pretty fair dissertation on the evils of bad government, and the necessity of an upright and steady administration of the law to the peace and prosperity of a country.

Archbishop Arundel.

BORN A. D. 1353.—DIED A. D. 1413.

THOMAS ARUNDEL, second son of Robert Fitz-Alan, earl of Arundel and Warren, and archbishop of Canterbury in the reigns of Richard II., Henry IV., and Henry V., was born in the year 1353. Long before this time, the pope had exercised a kind of feudal authority in England, and had claimed the right of bestowing benefices, and even of nominating to them by provision, or anticipation, before they became actually void. Against the whole of this usurpation the English government had protested; and, in the year 1350, by a statute of 25th Edward III., the pope's authority, in filling up the vacant bishoprics, was expressly disallowed. Still, however, in defiance of the English law, the pope continued to exercise this prerogative,—a circumstance to which Arundel owed his preferment from the archdeaconry of Taunton to the bishopric of Ely. He received the mitre at an earlier period of life than has been known in any other instance in the whole annals of the

English church. The king had written to the chapter, desiring them to elect his own confessor, John Woodroof, to the vacant bishopric; but the monks unanimously chose one Henry Wakefield, whereupon the pope stepped in, and, by virtue of his apostolic authority, declared the youthful archdeacon of Taunton, bishop of Ely. At 21 years of age he was consecrated bishop, and, two years afterwards, was enthroned at Ely with the usual solemnities.¹ Godwin relating this singularly judicious exercise of pontifical power, humorously describes this venerable prelate as full of years and gravity,—an old man, with one foot in the grave, who had almost completed his 22d year—"annosum quendam, quemque virum facile credas gravissimum."—"Cum jam," he adds, "O capularem senem! ætatis annum explevisset fere vicesimum secundum." Indeed the bishop seems to have carried with him, through every stage of his advancement, a puerile taste for show and splendour. While in the see of Ely, he presented the church and palace with a curious table of massy gold enriched with precious stones: and, after his accession in 1388, by virtue of the pope's bull, to the archiepiscopal see of York, besides building a magnificent palace for himself and his successors, he gave to the church many pieces of plate and other rich ornaments. In 1396, when, by the same authority, he was raised to the summit of ecclesiastical preferment, and enthroned with great pomp at Canterbury, he presented to the cathedral church several rich vestments, a mitre encased with jewels, a silver gilt crosier, and a gold chalice.

During the ten years which preceded Arundel's appointment to the archbishopric of Canterbury, he occupied, with some interruptions, the honourable and important post of lord-high-chancellor of England. He took a leading part in the first attempt which was made to deliver the nation from the oppression of Richard II., by obtaining a commission for the duke of Gloucester, the earl of Arundel, and others, to assume the regency, and was banished from his see, and from the kingdom, on the parliament declaring the said commission "prejudicial to the king's prerogative and dignity." Pope Boniface IX., however, seized this occasion of expressing his displeasure against the king and parliament of England for having attempted to deprive him of his provisional jurisdiction in that country, and gave Arundel an honourable reception at the court of Rome, nominated him to the archbishopric of St Andrews, and declared his intention of giving him other preferments in England, whereupon the king wrote an expostulatory letter to the pope, in which he describes Thomas Arundel as a man of a turbulent, seditious temper, who was endeavouring to undermine his government, and entreats that his holiness would not, by any act of his, "create such misunderstandings between the crown and the mitre, as it might prove difficult to remove;" at the same time adding: "If you have a mind to provide for him otherwise, we have nothing to object, only we cannot allow him to dip in our dish."² The pope not choosing to hazard a quarrel, withheld his intended favours from Arundel, and, at the king's request, promoted Roger Walden, dean of York, to the see of Canterbury.

¹ Bentham's Hist. and Antiq. of the Church of Ely, p. 164—166.

² Parker's Antiq. Brit.

Early in Henry's reign, the exigencies of the state requiring large supplies, a design was formed of seizing the revenues of the church, and applying them to the public service; and in the parliament held at Coventry in 1404, it was urged, that the wealth of the church might well be spared to the necessities of the state; that the clergy who had accumulated immense revenues, lived in idleness and luxury, and contributed little to the public benefit, while the laity were hazarding both their persons and fortunes in the service of their country; and that, therefore, in a moment of public necessity, it was reasonable to have recourse to this fund. Arundel, who was present, to avert the blow which threatened the church, pleaded that the clergy had always contributed more to the public service than the laity; that though they did not serve the king in person in his wars, yet they did military service by their tenants; and that they were at least as serviceable to the king by their prayers as the laity by their arms. The speaker of the house, Sir John Cheney, observed, that he thought the prayers of the church a very slender supply at best, and that its lands would do the nation much more service; whereupon the archbishop warmly retorted, and concluded by boldly defying the house to invade the rights and possessions of the church. The commons admired the archbishop's resolution, and confessed the impolicy of their expedient. While Arundel thus zealously defended the temporalities of the church, he discovered equal zeal for the preservation of its internal constitution. The Lollards and Wickliffites excited the jealousy of the metropolitan, and he adopted violent and unjustifiable measures for the suppression of these rising sects. Supported by the body of the clergy assembled in convocation at St Paul's, in London, who complained of the strange degeneracy and contumacy of the students in a university hitherto exemplary for its adherence to the Catholic faith, and for its order and correct behaviour, the archbishop sent delegates to the university of Oxford to inquire into the state of opinions among the students, many of whom were suspected of Wickliffitism; and a committee was appointed by the university to sit in inquisition, under the authority of the delegates upon heretical books, particularly those of Wickliffe, and to examine such persons as were suspected of favouring this new heresy. The report of these inquisitors was transmitted to the primate, who confirmed their censures; and the persecution thus raised, was carried by this bigot to an absurd and cruel extremity; he even went so far as to solicit from the pope a bull for digging up Wickliffe's bones, which, however, was wisely refused him. Upon the authority of the horrid act for burning heretics, passed in the reign of Henry IV., a Lollard, in the year 1410, was consigned to the stake; and at the commencement of the reign of Henry V., Lord Cobham, one of the principal patrons of the sect, was indicted by the primate, convicted of heresy, and sentenced to the flames. He also procured a synodal constitution, which forbade the translation of the scriptures into the vulgar tongue. Soon after pronouncing sentence of excommunication against Cobham, the archbishop was seized with an inflammation in his throat, which speedily terminated his life, on the 20th of February, 1413. The Lollards, who partook of the superstitious character of the times, imputed this sudden illness and death to the just judgment of God. Bishop Godwin says: "Justo Dei judicio factum ferunt, ut is qui verbum Dei,

animæ pabulum subtraxerat popularibus, clausis per anginam aut morbum aliquem consimilem faucibus, aliquanto ante mortem tempore, nec verbulum potuerit fari, nec cibi vel minimum deglutire, adeoque mutus fameque tandem enectus inediâ interierit."

Archbishop Chichele.

BORN A. D. 1362.—DIED A. D. 1433.

ON the death of Arundel, Henry Chichele was elevated to the primacy. Chichele was born at Higham-Ferrers in Northamptonshire, and educated at Winchester school and New College. Under the patronage of Richard Metford, bishop of Salisbury, he rose rapidly through various ecclesiastical preferments and dignities, until, in the year 1407, he was employed by Henry IV. in three successive embassies to Rome and the court of France. During his residence at the Roman court in 1408, Pope Gregory XII. presented him with the bishopric of St David's; and, in the following year, he was deputed, with Hallum, bishop of Salisbury, and Chillingdon, prior of Canterbury, to represent the English church in the council of Pisa. In May, 1410, the renewal of negotiations for a truce betwixt France and England, was chiefly entrusted to Chichele; and on the accession of Henry V., he was sent a third time into France to negotiate a peace.

Chichele obtained the primacy at a critical moment. The king had made demands on the court of France, which promised to end in a rupture with that country, and large supplies were wanted. The parliament urged Henry to seize the revenues of the church, and apply them to the use of the crown. The clergy, alarmed for the whole, wisely resolved to sacrifice a part in the hope of saving the rest, and voluntarily agreed to surrender all the alien priories which depended on capital abbeys in Normandy, and had been bequeathed to these abbeys while that province remained united to England, and Chichele was deputed to lay their offer before parliament, and recommend it to the king's acceptance. The offer was accepted, and the archbishop was the first to inform the French envoys at the English court, that the only terms on which peace could be preserved was the instant and full restoration to his sovereign, of all the territories which had ever been possessed by his predecessors. It is alleged by some historians that Chichele secretly wished to plunge Henry into a war, as the most effectual means of diverting the blow which then threatened the church. But, while it is certain that this prelate was one of the most strenuous advisers of a war with France, it is not less certain that he needed not to create by any artificial or secret policy, the love of foreign warfare in his sovereign's mind; the disposition already existed there in sufficient strength, and in what manner the archbishop could have repressed it, supposing a pacific course to have been clearly the better policy at the time, cannot now be determined without a much more intimate knowledge of the state of parties in England at the time than we possess. During this period, however, besides taking the lead in the affairs of state at home, the archbishop twice accompanied the king in his campaigns in France.

During the minority of Henry VI., and the regency of the duke of Gloucester, Chichele retired, in a great measure, from public life, and employed himself in visiting the several dioceses in his province. The principles of Wickliffe had now made considerable progress throughout the country, yet it does not appear that the holders of the new doctrines found in this primate quite so bitter and relentless a foe as they had experienced in his predecessor, Arundel. History has done ample justice to the spirit with which he resisted the pretensions of the pope to the disposal of ecclesiastical benefices in England. In this he was supported by a majority of the bishops, as well as by the university of Oxford, and the general feeling of the nation. Martin V. threatened England with excommunication in consequence of this display of sentiment; but the university of Oxford hesitated not to assure his holiness that they regarded Chichele as standing in the sanctuary of God, "a firm wall that heresy could not shake, nor simony undermine," and the death of Martin himself soon after relieved the archbishop of further trouble in this matter from Rome.

In later life, Chichele, who had always proved himself a munificent patron of the universities, conceived the plan of founding another college at Oxford. Like his predecessor Wykeham, he had amassed considerable wealth, which he determined to expend in promoting the cause of education. The foundation of All Souls' college was the result of these intentions. The whole college was finished in 1444. In the first charter, Henry VI. assumed the title of founder at the archbishop's solicitation, who appears to have paid the monarch this compliment with a view to secure his patronage for the institution, but the full exercise of legislative authority was reserved to the prelate himself as co-founder. A few days before his death, the archbishop completed a body of statutes for the regulation of his college, modelled after those of Wykeham. The society was appointed to consist of a warden and twenty fellows, sixteen of whom were to study the civil and canon law, and the rest were to devote themselves to philosophy, the arts, and theology.

In 1442, Chichele applied to Pope Eugenius for permission to resign his office into more able hands, he being now nearly eighty years old, and, as he pathetically urges, "heavy, laden, aged, infirm, and weak beyond measure." He died, however, before the issue of his application could be known, on the 12th of April, 1433, and was interred, with great solemnity, in the cathedral of Canterbury. His character is that of an able statesman, and learned and liberal prelate. In the former character he exerted himself with considerable success in conciliating the parliament and the nation towards the church, and in supporting the dignity of the crown; in the latter, he did much to improve the tone and habits of the clergy, and to repress those abuses which the spirit of the times engendered. His memory, however, is not altogether free of the charge of intolerance. Several persons were committed to the flames during his primacy for the crime of Lollardy; others were condemned to perpetual imprisonment, and a variety of other severe punishments. By one of his constitutions, three of the principal inhabitants of every parish were solemnly sworn to make diligent inquiry and search after all Lollards, and every thing savouring of Lollardy, within their district, and to transmit a report in writing to their arch-

deacon twice every year. He was succeeded in the primacy by Stafford, bishop of Bath.

Cardinal Beaufort.

DIED A. D. 1447.

HENRY BEAUFORT, bishop of Winchester, and cardinal priest in the Roman church, was the son of John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, by his third wife, Catherine Swinford. His studies were conducted partly at both English universities, and partly at Aix-la-Chapelle, at the latter of which places he devoted himself chiefly to the study of the civil and common law.¹ His connexion with royalty insured him early advancement in the church. In 1397, he was appointed bishop of Lincoln, by Pope Boniface IX.; in 1399, chancellor of the university of Oxford; and in 1404, lord-high-chancellor of England. On the death of Wykeham he was translated to the see of Winchester.

We may form some idea of the wealth which this fortunate prelate commanded, from the circumstance, that when Henry V. was meditating his expedition against France, and his commons had declared themselves unable to grant farther subsidies, Beaufort alone, and unaided, lent his royal nephew the sum of twenty thousand pounds²—a sum which must have appeared quite enormous in those days. Godwin says that this loan was intended to divert the king's attention from the overgrown revenues of the clergy, whose wealth had now arrived at its highest pitch. This transaction occurred in 1417. In the same year Beaufort took a journey to the Holy Land. Whilst passing through Constance in this journey, he attended the general council then sitting in that city, and materially contributed by his arguments and influence to the election of Martin III. to the vacant papal chair.

In 1424, Beaufort was appointed, for the fourth time, lord-high-chancellor of England. Henry VI. was at this period in his minority, and Humphrey, duke of Gloucester held the regency. Intrigue, however, prevailed in the cabinet, and the animosity of Beaufort and Gloucester threatened to involve the country in a civil war. "The English Pope," says one historian, "in his magnificence and grandeur seemed so much to outshine the protector himself, though on the throne almost, that he drew his odium and hatred upon him; which was so increased by the haughty spirit of the bishop—who, being the protector's uncle and the pope's legate, carried himself as if he were much above him both in nature and grace—that the protector could not endure his pride, and so an implacable enmity grew between them; and great parties were raised on both sides for each other's defence, the bishop's dependencies, money, and church-power, making him able to contend with the protector himself."³ Holinshed has inserted in his 'Chronicles,' a letter from Beaufort to his nephew the duke of Bedford, then regent of France, soliciting his presence in England to mediate betwixt him and Gloucester:—"For by my troth," adds the prelate, "if you tarry, we shall put this land in jeopardy with a field; such a brother you have

¹ Godwin de Præsal. Angl.

² Speed, 803.

³ Complete Hist. of England, vol. i. p. 351.

here. God make him a good man!"⁴ Bedford, complying with the bishop's request, arrived in England in December 1425, and immediately convoked an assembly of the nobles, at St Alban's, to hear and determine the matter; but the two parties instantly assumed such a hostile appearance towards each other, that it was deemed prudent to delay the business for a time. On the 25th of March, the peers again met at Leicester, when the duke exhibited six articles of impeachment against his rival the bishop of Winchester. The substance of these articles was as follows:—That the bishop had prevented the protector from obtaining access to the tower; that he had secretly concerted measures for getting the young king removed from Eltham to Windsor; that he had compassed the death of the protector; that he had made an attempt on the life of the late king, by the hands of a hired assassin; that during the sickness of Henry IV. he had advised his son to assume the government, without waiting for his father's decease; that in his letter to the duke of Bedford he had plainly avowed his intention of stirring up a rebellion in the nation. To these articles the bishop exhibited distinct answers; and a committee having been appointed to examine the respective allegations of the parties, the bishop was pronounced clear of the whole charges preferred against him; whereupon, Speed tells us the duke and the bishop were persuaded to swear friendship in future, the one upon his princehood, and the other upon his priesthood. The duke of Bedford, however, took away the great seal from his uncle. Two years afterwards, the duke returning into France, was accompanied to Calais by the bishop of Winchester, who there received the cardinal's hat sent him by Martin V.

Beaufort's return with increased dignities was by no means acceptable to his late rival who still cherished former animosities, and who anticipated the cardinal's arrival by a proclamation, in the king's name, forbidding the exercise of legantine power within the realm of England, as being incompatible with the "special privilege and custom used and observed from time to time, that a legate from the apostolic see shall enter this land, or any of the king's dominions, without the calling, petition, request, invitation, or desire of the king."⁵ In 1427, Cardinal Beaufort was appointed the pope's legate in Germany and general of the crusade then about to be undertaken against the Hussites in Bohemia. Of his success as a military leader, we have conflicting accounts. Polydore Virgil assures us that he put a new face on affairs which looked gloomy on his arrival, and that he returned home after having conducted a most successful campaign; but Aubrey declares that he fully participated in the disgrace of the other leaders on the papal side, who were attacked and driven back with great loss by the Hussites; and the account given by the last mentioned author seems to derive confirmation from the fact that he was recalled from Bohemia by the pope, who sent Cardinal Julian in his place with a larger army.

In 1430, the cardinal accompanied King Henry into France, and had the honour to perform the ceremony of crowning the young monarch in the church of Notre Dame at Paris. He was also present with the title of the king's principal counsellor at the conference of Arras, for concluding a peace between the kings of England and France. Meanwhile, the duke of Gloucester, nothing daunted by these obvious

⁴ Chron. p. 591.

⁵ Fox's Acts and Monuments, p. 649.

marks of favour conferred upon his rival, pursued a course of bitter hostility towards the absent prelate, and obtained several orders in council of a nature well calculated to deprive Beaufort of the king's favour. But his better influence prevailed, and, whether consciously guilty or not of the offences laid to his charge, we find him on the 26th of July 1437, obtaining a full pardon under the great seal, for all offences by him committed from the creation of the world up to that date.⁶ In 1442, Gloucester, unwearied in his hostility towards the cardinal, exhibited fresh articles of impeachment against him. The king referred the matter to his council; but no decisive steps were taken in consequence, and the prosecution died away.

The rivalry of Beaufort and Gloucester only terminated with their lives, for the bishop survived his rival not above a month. He died on the 14th of June, 1447, and was buried in the cathedral church of Winchester. The greater part of his immense fortune he bequeathed to religious and charitable purposes; and if Harpsfield is to be credited, one of his donations consisted of the enormous sum of £400,000 to the prisons of London!⁷ His character was that of a haughty and ambitious but skilful statesman; deeply accomplished in all the mysteries of state intrigue, and little scrupulous in availing himself of every turn of fortune for his own personal aggrandizement. His talents were evidently of a high order; and he always possessed great influence in the lower house of parliament. Various accounts have been given of the secret cause of dislike which from the first existed betwixt Beaufort and Gloucester; perhaps the simplest, which traces their bitter enmity to political rivalry alone, is the most correct. Beaufort has been charged with procuring the murder of his rival; and on this alleged fact Shakspeare has founded the terrific death-bed scene in the second part of his Henry the Sixth.

Bishop Waynflete.

BORN A. D. 1395 (?).—DIED A. D. 1486.

It is not clear whether Patten or Barbour was the proper family name of this eminent prelate. The appellation of Waynflete was taken from the place of his birth, in Lincolnshire, and was first assumed when he went into orders. "It was a fashion," says Holinshed, "in those days, from a learned spirituall man to take awaie the father's surname (were it never so worshipfull or ancient) and give him for it the name of the towne he was borne in." His father appears to have followed the profession, so highly respectable in those days, of a barber-surgeon. Chandler is indeed anxious to prove that the bishop's father was a gentleman by birth; but we neither sympathise with the anxiety of the learned biographer, nor are we satisfied with his proofs on this point. The exact year of William's birth is not known. It appears from the registers of the see of Lincoln that he was made a sub-deacon in January, 1420, and a priest in 1426. We may conjecture, therefore, that he was born towards the close of the 14th century.

He was educated at Wykeham's school at Winchester, of which he was afterwards appointed master by Beaufort, bishop of Winchester.

His first ecclesiastical preferment was the mastership of St Mary Magdalene's leper-hospital near Winchester, of which the ruins are still visible. From his early connection with this establishment probably arose his attachment to the name, which he afterwards bestowed on his hall and college in Oxford. The ability he displayed in his mastership at Winchester, and the influence of Bekyngton, formerly his school-fellow, and now a rising man at the court of Henry VI., procured for him the mastership, and subsequently the provostship, of the king's new school at Eton. This situation had, in the case of Stambery, the first provost, led to a bishopric, and was destined again to effect a like elevation in Waynflete's favour. On the death of Cardinal Beaufort, in 1447, Waynflete obtained from the king the *congé d'élire* addressed to the chapter of Winchester, and was elected accordingly. Budden, who published a life of Waynflete in Latin, in 1602, drops a hint with respect to this and other preferments, that Waynflete "did not, perhaps, entirely abstain from availing himself of the power of illustrious persons." However this may be, his more recent biographer assures us, that when the ecclesiastical deputation from Winchester waited upon him to announce his election, "from sincere reluctance, or a decent compliance with the fashion of the times, he protested often and with tears, and could not be prevailed on to undertake the important office to which he was called, until they found him about sun-set, in the church of St Mary; when he consented, saying, he would no longer resist the Divine will." Waynflete held the see of Winchester throughout the remainder of his long life.

In 1448 he obtained a royal grant empowering him to found and endow a hall at Oxford, which university was then in a very depressed state. In 1450, when the rebellion of Jack Cade burst forth, Waynflete retired to the nunnery of Holywell; but on being summoned to confer with his sovereign at Canterbury, on the best means of quelling the insurrection, he instantly complied, and advised the issuing of a proclamation offering pardon to all concerned in the rising except Cade himself, in consequence of which the rebels dispersed, leaving their leader to his fate. Soon after this, our prelate, in conjunction with the bishop of Ely, acted as commissioners betwixt the king and Richard, duke of York, when that nobleman took up arms. In October, 1453, Waynflete baptized the young prince of Wales, afterwards Edward IV. In October, 1456, after having been much employed in affairs of state, he was advanced to the dignity of lord-high-chancellor, in the room of Bouchier, archbishop of Canterbury, which office, however, he prudently resigned in July, 1460, before the fatal wreck of his royal master's fortunes in the battle of Northampton. His resignation has been attributed to very unworthy motives, and he has been occasionally represented as trimming, in this and other instances, betwixt the rival parties of York and Lancaster; but Henry himself, in a letter which he wrote to Pope Pius II., while in the custody of the Yorkists, expressly acquits his chancellor of all blame, and bears ample and voluntary testimony to the fidelity and skill with which Waynflete had at all times served him. That Waynflete conducted himself with consummate prudence throughout one of the most difficult and disastrous periods of English history is clear, for he not only retained the confidence of his own Lancastrian party, but commanded the respect of the York-

ists, and even appears to have been in favour with Edward IV., who confirmed the grants made to his college, and added licenses of mortmain.

Bishop Waynflete died of a short but violent illness on the 11th of August, 1486, and was interred with great funeral pomp in Winchester cathedral, in a magnificent sepulchral chapel which had been prepared for the purpose during his own lifetime, and which is kept in the finest preservation by the society of Magdalene college. His will bequeaths "his soul to Almighty God, the Virgin, Mary Magdalene, and the patron-saints of his cathedral;" and, among sundry other arrangements, enjoins on his executors "to cause five thousand masses, in honour of the five wounds of Christ, and the five joys of the Virgin Mary, to be celebrated on the day of his burial, the trental of his obit, and other days, as soon as possible, for his soul, and the souls of his parents and friends." Waynflete was one of the prelates who sat in judgment upon Dr Reginald Pococke, bishop of Chichester, whose religious opinions had given offence to the church. On this occasion, the court was unanimous in condemning Pococke's doctrines, and enjoining him to recant and abjure them; he was also ordered to remain in confinement in his own house, and his writings were directed to be burnt; but in all these proceedings, Mr Lewis affirms, the archbishop Bourchier took a much more active share than Waynflete, though then filling the office of chancellor. Of the bishop's sincere attachment to the Romish church there can be no doubt; but it has been justly remarked, that he did perhaps as much mischief to the popish cause by his zeal in the promotion of learning, as all his other labours did it good. From the college founded and endowed by him at Oxford, not a few powerful abettors of the Reformation were sent forth.

III.—LITERARY SERIES.

Henry Bracton.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1250.

THIS distinguished lawyer is said, by the most eminent antiquaries, to have been a native of Devonshire, and to have descended from a family of high respectability. The date of his birth is not stated, but he is known to have studied at Oxford, and to have gained considerable reputation there for learning and ability. The law was that branch of knowledge which promised, in the age when he lived, the greatest rewards for diligence and ability, and to that accordingly he devoted himself. It was not, however, from skill in the civil law alone that wealth or distinction was now to be acquired in England, and when

* Rymer's Fœd. p. 670. ' Hist. Eccles. p. 643.

he took his degree of doctor, he was eminently versed in the common law, as well as in the more ancient branches of the science. Full of professional erudition, and accomplished in all the learning of the period, he in due time removed to London, where his abilities quickly brought him into general notice, and recommended him to the patronage of Henry the Third. The monarch finding how valuable his services might be rendered in the conduct of the state, used every means to retain him near his person, and for that purpose granted him the use of the earl of Darby's house, till the heirs of that deceased nobleman should occupy it themselves. In the twenty-ninth year of his reign, he still further manifested the respect with which he regarded him, by appointing him to the office of justiciary-itinerant. In this capacity he evinced a prudence and discernment which at length raised him to the eminent station of chief-justice, which he held above twenty years. The most unmingled praise is accorded him for the virtues as well as talent which he exhibited in the exercise of his functions, while occupying this important office. He so tempered, it is said, his justice and authority with equity and integrity, that he was one of the chief pillars of the commonwealth, in which he allowed no one to offend without punishment, and no one to do well without being rewarded.

As an author, he is celebrated for having produced a work of great learning, entitled '*De Consuetudinibus Anglicanis*,' or '*De Consuetudinibus et Legibus Angliæ*.' According to Bishop Nicholson, this production, like that of Lyttleton, was not printed till a considerable period after it had been received in the world as a valuable addition to the stock of legal literature. So numerous, indeed, were the manuscript copies which had been taken, that it was with the utmost difficulty the persons who undertook to edit it for the press could satisfy themselves in preparing the copy. Bishop Nicholson remarks that he must be pardoned his easy admission of the pope's supremacy, and his sometimes naturalizing the canon as well as civil law, when we consider the time wherein he wrote, that it was done after King John had made a formal conveyance of his realm to the see of Rome, and when the greatest part of Europe was entirely under the pope's dominion. The passages that savour strong of the iniquity and vassalage of those unhappy days, are not many; and there is that disagreeable obliquity in them from the description of our true English government, that they are readily discerned to be preternatural and monstrous. Some idea may be formed of the work from these observations of the bishop. They also serve to point out the important use which might be made of such early treatises in the study of English history, and, consequently, the place which Bracton and other writers of a similar kind ought to occupy, even in a literary point of view, among the authors of the country.

The period of Bracton's death is equally uncertain with that of his birth, nor is it known where he was buried, or what became of his family. His work has been frequently appealed to in times of political excitement. Milton, in his celebrated '*Defensio pro populo Anglicanis*,' quotes largely from it, to prove that when the king attempts to govern by his will and not by the law, he ceases to possess authority. A similar use, it is said, was made of the work by Bradshaw, when as president of the high court of justice he addressed the judges of Charles

the First. It is plain, however, from passages in the work expressed in language of equal force, that it was only to the most evident violation of the tenor by which the king reigns, that the opinions alluded to refer. In those places where mention is made of the royal prerogative, he speaks of it in the usual language of the times when he wrote. It may, therefore, be justly inferred that, imperfectly as the theory of government might then be understood by the generality of people, this eminent civilian had formed very correct notions of the true balance which ought to be preserved between the several branches of the legislature.

Robert of Gloucester.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1260.

THE origin and earliest condition of the language and the poetic literature of England form a subject full of interest and attraction for the antiquarian and the philologist, but do not offer much to engage the attention of the lover of poetry for its own sake. Before the commencement of the 14th century we had a few versifiers, but hardly any poet. The Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester, who probably flourished about the year 1260, is the first long work in verse which can properly be considered as written in the English dialect, at that time a barbarous and unregulated medley of Saxon and Norman, and hardly in truth fit for the purposes of composition at all. The poem in question is nothing more than a metrical version of the famous Latin history of Geoffrey of Monmouth, which had been previously translated in like manner into Norman-French verse by Wace of Jersey, and into a species of degenerated Saxon by Layamon. There does not appear to be much in any one of these three popular imitations of the fabulous annalist indicative of any thing like poetic inspiration; nor can we speak in greatly more flattering terms of the subsequent production of Robert Mannyng, or De Brunne, a fourth translator from the same favourite original, who is conjectured to have written about the close of the 13th century, and the most remarkable characteristic of whose compositions is merely an apparent ease and fluency of versification, which, however, it is agreeable to remark, were it only as evidencing the somewhat improved state to which the language had even already attained.

Few or no materials exist to throw any light on the personal history of Robert of Gloucester, or on that of many of his contemporaries. Neither Bale nor Pits, those two laborious biographers of the fathers of our literature, make any mention of him. Selden has determined that he lived in the reign of Edward I. Other antiquaries have also discovered that he was a monk of Gloucester, and the learned Thomas Hearne supposes that he was sent to Oxford by the directors of the great abbey of Gloucester, to take care of the youth whom they placed in that university. The same writer says that he seems to have occupied an old house on the west side of the Stockwell-street, and on the site of which was afterwards built Worcester college, originally called Gloucester hall. Much labour has been expended in endeavours to discover the

surname of the monk, and the remarks of Hearne upon the subject show with what care that zealous antiquary exerted himself in elucidating every question relating to his favourite author. The result of his inquiries was, that his name is not to be found in either an ancient or modern hand in the Harleian manuscripts; that it appears only once in the Cottonian collection, and that without the surname; and that no previous antiquary seems to have been acquainted with him by any other appellation than that of Robert of Gloucester. It is supposed that his surname began to be disused after he attained notice as a writer, and from this circumstance it is inferred that he must have enjoyed, among his cotemporaries, his ordinary share of celebrity. "That his fame was very great," says Hearne, "may appear from hence, that though many Robert of Gloucesters are met with in old registers, yet, as far as we can learn, they were all eclipsed by the historian, the acts of all of them put together being not equal to what he hath done by compiling this work." Of the merits of the chronicler as a poet, Hearne prudently forbears, with all his zeal and veneration, to say much. But his authority is of weight in whatever concerns our ancient literature, and he boldly asserts, that of all books likely to prove useful in the study of the Saxon tongue, none is so valuable as the chronicle of Robert of Gloucester. Declining also, as he does, to compare him with Chaucer, in respect to poetical merit, he claims for him the honour of being the first of English writers. "He, and not Chaucer," says he, "as Dr Fuller and some others would have it, is the genius of the English nation, and he is, on that account, to be as much respected as ever Ennius himself was among the Romans, and I have good reason to think that he will be so by friends to our antiquities and our old history." 'Tis the genius of the age that is to be regarded in such pieces of poetry. The poetry of those times consisted of rhythms both here and in other countries, and the poets thought they had done their parts well, if their rhythms, however mean otherwise, related matter of fact, and were agreeable to truth. Fuller, in the mention he has made of Robert of Gloucester among the other worthies of England, observes in his usual quaint but forcible style, "they speak truly who term him a rhymers, whilst such speak courteously who call him a poet. Indeed, such his language, that he is *dumb* in effect to the readers of this our age, without an interpreter, and such a one will hardly be procured. Antiquaries, among whom Mr Selden, more value him for his history than poetry, his lines being neither strong nor smooth, but sometimes sharp." Camden, however, speaks more favourably of his poetry, and contends, like his editor Hearne, for the merit of his verses on the plea of their being thoroughly English. "Old Robert of Gloucester," says he, "in the time of King Henry the Third, honoured his country with these his best English rimes, which, I doubt not, but some, (although most now are of the new cut,) will give the reading." The lines he quotes will afford as good a sample, perhaps, of his Chronicle, the only work he is known to have written, as could be selected.—

England is a well good land, in the stead best
 Set in the one end of the world, and reigneth west.
 The sea goeth him all about, he stint as an yle,
 Of foes it need the lesse doubt; but it be through gile

Of folke of the self land, as me hath I sey while
 From south to north it is long, eight hundred mile,
 And two hundred mile broad from east to west to wend,
 Amid the land as it might be, and not as in the one end,
 Plentie men may in England of all good see,
 But folke it agult, other yeares the worse and worse be.
 For England is full enough of fruite and of treene,
 Of woods and of parks that joy it is to seene.

The principal cities are thus briefly characterized :—

In the countrey of Canterbury, most plenty of fish is,
 And most chase of wilde beasts about Salisbury Iris.
 And London ships most, and wine at Winchester.
 At Hartford sheep and oxe, and fruite at Worcester.
 Soape about Coventry, and yron at Glocester.
 Metall, lead, and tinne, in the countrey of Exeter.
 Evorwicke of fairest wood, Lincolne of fairest men.
 Cambridge and Huntington most plenty of deep venne.
 Elite of fairest place; of fairest sight Rochester.

“Far short,” it is shrewdly observed, “was he that would comprise the excellencies of England in this one verse :”—

Montes, fontes, pontes, ecclesie, feminae, lana.
 Mountains, fountains, bridges, churches, women and wool.

It was more, however, owing perhaps to the naturally staid temperament of Robert himself, than to the taste of the age, that his poetry exhibited so few marks of vigour or imagination. Between the period when he flourished and that when the verses were written which exhibit so many traces of fancy, there had elapsed about fifty or sixty years. In that time, the people had been gradually acquiring a greater degree of freedom, and consequently of knowledge and refinement. What is still further to the purpose, there were in existence when this dry chronicle of facts was produced, a variety of chivalrous ballads and romances, remarkable for the strangeness of their fictions, and their unlicensed freedom of imagery. That such must have been in circulation at the time, we may fairly believe, when we consider the state of manners and the events which were then engrossing the thoughts of almost every individual in the kingdom. The crusades had just filled the world with the spirit of enthusiasm and adventure. Consequent on this were a train of new and more strongly excited sympathies than had ever before agitated the minds of men in general. Devotion led some, the love of novelty others, to undertake the perilous enterprize; but whatever was the motive which sent them to the plains of Syria, their course was contemplated by those they left behind with an intense and breathless emotion. Hence poetry would naturally strain every nerve to depict the virtues of the soldiers of the cross: would rejoice in relating their varied fortunes, in proving how well they deserved the applause or the tears which every heart was ready to bestow. But of the poetry which celebrated the grandeur of chivalry and the worth of its professors, few examples remain, few at least that can be ascribed to the age of which we are speaking. When we consider, says Warton, “the feudal manners, and the magnificence of our Norman ancestors, their love of military glory, and the enthusiasm with which they engaged in the crusades, and the wonders to which they must have been familiarized

from those eastern enterprises, we naturally suppose, what will hereafter be more particularly proved, that their retinues abounded with minstrels and harpers, and that their chief entertainment was to listen to the recital of romantic and martial adventures." "But," continues the historian, "I have been much disappointed in my searches after the metrical tales which must have prevailed in their times. Most of those old heroic songs have perished, together with the stately castles in whose halls they were sung." We cannot, therefore, tell from an examination of the originals, what was the precise character of the old songs of English chivalry, but the substance of them, it is supposed, was wrought into the metrical romances of which so many specimens still remain, and most of which are strikingly opposed in character to the work of Robert of Gloucester. It is evident, therefore, that there were now in vogue two very distinct species of poetry, and it is not improbable, but that it was owing to this circumstance that the poetry of the next age possessed such high and genuine merit. The unambitious chroniclers, who so readily sacrificed every sparkling of fancy to the plain narrative of facts,—who were only desirous of being historians in rhyme, because in that form they would be more generally read, and the facts they related better remembered,—the writers of this class did, there is little doubt, important service to the poetical literature of the country, by teaching the people to regard verse as a fit medium for regular and sustained narrative, and thereby to look for those species of poetry in which fiction is imitative of reality, and the likenesses unbroken by any thing heterogeneous in the medium through which we see them.

The obscurity which attends the personal fortunes and character of Robert of Gloucester pertains to most of the names which occur in the literary history of this period. There is not even a traditional lustre to attract the attention of the antiquarian to their fates. But it is in this as in other cases: the want of biographical materials is in great measure compensated for by the historical interest attached to the compositions of these obscure writers, and it is to that consequently, even the student of biography, when he passes a certain line in the annals of either this or any other nation, will chiefly direct his thoughts.

Robert Mannyng.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1270.

THIS writer, like Robert of Gloucester, with whom he was cotemporary, was a monk, and belonged to the monastery of Brunne, or Bourne, near Depyng in Lincolnshire, of which he was a Gilbertine canon. A passage occurs in one of his poems, in which he alludes to his early education, and, according to the interpretation of Mr Ellis, it may be decided therefrom, that he was a native of Malton, and flourished as late as the reign of Edward the Third. The lines are:—

In the Third Edward's time was I,
When I wrote all this storey.
In the house of Sixille I was a throve,
Dan Robert of Malton that ye know

Did it write for fellows' sake,
When thai willed solace make.

He appears to have occupied a somewhat conspicuous station among the writers of his age, and Hearne observes, that it is probable he assumed the appellation of De Brunne, choosing to let his proper surname fall into forgetfulness, in imitation of Robert of Gloucester. It was not, however, only in this respect that he followed the example of that author. His principal work is a metrical history, or chronicle of England. But, according to the testimony of the most ingenious antiquaries, the former part of this poem is a mere translation of a French romance, entitled '*Roman de Rois d'Angleterre*,' 'or Brut d'Angleterre;' and it is a circumstance not unworthy of attention, that the version is made in the exact measure of the original. The prologue also is in perfect accordance with the style of similar addresses, as they are found in the *Orlando Innamorato* of Boiardo, and other Italian romantic poets.—

Lordynges that be now here,
If ye wille listene and lere,
All the story of Inglande,
Als Robert Mannyng wryten it fand,
And on Inglysh has it schewed,
Not for the lered but for the lewed;
For tho that on this lond wonn
That the Latin ne Franky's conn,
For to half solace and gamen
In felauschip when tha sitt samen,
And it is wisdom forto wryten
The state of the land, and hef it wrytten,
What manere of folk first it wan,
And of what kind it first began.

The Chronicler then proceeds to relate, with great seriousness, all the events which happened in this country from the time of '*Sir Noe*,' unto Eneas; from Eneas unto Brutus; and from Brutus to Cadweldres. In doing which, he professes to show in respect to these kings—

Whilk were foles, and whilk were wyse,
And whilk of them couth most quantyse;
And whilk did wrong, and whilk ryght,
And whilk mayntaned pes and fyght.

On completing that portion of the poem of which the divisions are thus laid down, the author leaves the Brut d'Angleterre, and draws his materials from another French work, which, it is remarkable enough, had been written a few years before by a canon of the monastery of Bridlington in Yorkshire. The name of this author was Peter Langtoft, and his chronicle, which consists of five books, is written in Alexandrines, a measure which was long one of the most admired species of verse both in France and England. Robert de Brunne, who was a most faithful translator, imitated his style as closely as he did that of Wace, the author of the Brut d'Angleterre, and the second part of his poem accordingly is in Alexandrines. Warton, has observed that he had little more poetry in him than Robert of Gloucester; but has added, as some apology for him, that he has acquainted his readers that he avoided high description and the usual phraseology of the minstrels

and harpers of his time. His lines on the subject give a good idea of the state of the language at the period :—

I mad noght for no disours,
 Ne for seggers no harpours,
 Bot for the luf of symple men,
 That strange Inglis cannot ken,
 For many it ere that strange Inglis
 In ryme wate never what it is,
 I made it not for to be praysed,
 Bot at the lewed men were aysed.

But Robert de Brunne did not confine his labours to these historical subjects: he also translated the treatise written in French by the celebrated Grosthead, bishop of Lincoln, entitled 'Manuel de Peche,' or 'Manual of Sins;' a work which throws some singular light on the religious notions of the age and on the modes in which they were disseminated. Robert himself tells us that he translated it to furnish men with amusement, "for gamys and festys at the ale," when they love to listen to tales and rhymes. The most serious moral injunctions are, therefore, accompanied in this work, with numerous romantic legends, and Bishop Grosthead himself is represented as having his harper lodged in a chamber next his own, as employing his skill by night and day, and answering a person who inquired 'Why he held the harper so dear?' that,—

The vertu of the harpe, thurgh skyle and ryght,
 Wyll destrye the fendys myght;
 And to the cros by gode skylle
 Ys the harpe lykened weyl.

The other work of Robert de Brunne was a translation of the treatise of Cardinal Bonaventura, the title of which, in the version of our author, is 'Medytaciuns of the Soper of our Lorde Jhesu, and also of hys Passyun, and eke of the Peynes of hys swete Modyr mayden Marye, the whyche made yn Latyn Bonaventure Cardynall.'

Warton's opinion that Robert was nothing more than a translator, has been controverted by the learned editor of the History of English Poetry, who observes that he generally enlarges the moral precepts of the original, introduces occasional illustrations of his own, and sometimes avails himself of other authorities than those employed by this writer whom he chiefly follows. The same remark may also be made in respect to this writer, which was made in the notice of Robert of Gloucester. Notwithstanding his want of fancy, he was instrumental in improving the poetical literature of the country, by introducing a more regular species of metrical narrative than has hitherto been known; to which may be added, that he deserves very high praise for having discernment enough to adapt his productions to that class of persons whom it was most beneficial and necessary to inspire with a taste for literature.

Adam Davie, who is commonly mentioned as the next of our poets, appears to have been nearly contemporary with De Brunne, and may perhaps be considered as rather his superior both in elegance and spirit. Laurence Minot, whose works had been entirely forgotten till they were accidentally discovered by the late Mr Tyrerwhitt, while

collecting materials for his admirable edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, wrote about half a century afterwards a series of poems on the principal events of the reign of Edward III., which have been very vehemently lauded by the learned but eccentric Mr Ritson, to whom the world is indebted for their first appearance from the press. He writes with very considerable vigour and animation, and has upon the whole a good deal more about him of the true poet than any of his predecessors.

John Duns Scotus.

BORN A. D. 1266.—DIED A. D. 1308.

THIS famous scholastic doctor was born towards the close of the thirteenth century, in the north of England, or, as some are of opinion, in Scotland. At this time, the Aristotelian logic enjoyed very great popularity and authority. It was also the age in which the several recently established orders of mendicant friars were in the very height of their reputation. These were four in number, the Dominicans, or Black friars, called also Friars preachers; the Carmelites or White friars; the Augustins, or Grey friars, as they were called, from the colour of their principal robe; and the Franciscans, also called Grey friars, for the same reasons, or Cordeliers, in allusion to the cord which they wore as a belt, or Minorites, that is inferiors, a title they were fond of giving themselves, in affectation of extreme humility. Of the four orders, the Franciscans and Dominicans were by far the most celebrated. The different associations of mendicant friars took their rise about the beginning of the thirteenth century, when the establishments of the regular monks, in consequence of the large revenues of which they had become possessed, having generally fallen into a state of extreme disorder, dissoluteness, and inefficiency, the church felt the necessity of endeavouring to keep alive the attachment of the people, by means of a new description of religious labourers, constituted upon principles which would insure in them at least an extraordinary activity, and all that show of zeal, by which the popular applause is most apt to be gained. The mendicant orders were accordingly established, and the experiment was attended with even more than the expected success. The new ascetics neglected nothing by which they might draw to themselves the favour and reverence of the multitude; and among the means to which they resorted for this purpose, none produced a more remarkable effect than the ardour with which they devoted themselves to literature, and the celebrity which, in consequence, they speedily acquired, for their skill in the frivolous pursuits then known by the name of learning. They had begun, in particular, even before the time of Duns Scotus, to apply themselves with great eagerness to the study of that disputatious philosophy which had been raised on the basis of the logical and metaphysical writings of Aristotle; and an active rivalry had already arisen, in regard to their respective pretensions in this department of erudition, between the Franciscans and the Dominicans,—the former counting among their number the seraphic Doctor Bonaventura, and the irrefragable Alexander Hales,—while the latter boasted

of their Albert the great, and the angelical St Thomas Aquinas; these strange epithets being titles which had been solemnly conferred, in some cases by the universities, along with their degrees, upon the individuals in question. It was destined for Duns, however, to become eventually the greatest glory of the Franciscans, among whom he was first introduced, if we may believe the story that is told by two brethren of the order, who found him tending his father's cows, and were so much struck with his intelligence, that they requested his father to allow them to take him along with them to their monastery in the neighbourhood, that so promising a genius might be duly reared up to the service of the church. The proof, indeed, which the legend informs us he gave of his capacity, was no mean one; for the good friars, it seems, finding the boy quite destitute of religious knowledge, and having thereupon resolved to attempt teaching him the Lord's Prayer, were confounded by his repeating the whole to them, without a blunder, after only once hearing it. We are not sure, however, that this anecdote is quite reconcilable with another still more marvellous, which is also told respecting the youth of this great doctor: namely, that he was originally very stupid and slow of apprehension, a circumstance which gave him great distress, till, having one day taken it into his head to address himself very earnestly in prayer, upon the subject, to the Virgin Mary, she condescended to appear, and enter into conversation with him, promising that she would wonderfully illuminate his understanding, if he would only engage to devote his powers to her service; upon consenting to which condition, he found himself accordingly endowed, on the instant, with the rare talents of which his future career gave such splendid proof.¹ Such of the biographers of Scotus as are for our believing both of these stories, hold that the adventure of the interview with the Virgin must have happened previously to that with the friars; while those who are willing to give up one of them, to save the credit of the other, pass over in silence the proof young Duns is said to have afforded of his extraordinary memory; the anecdote of his obligations to, and compact with, the Virgin, being one they will by no means part with. Indeed this notion of his having enjoyed the peculiar favour of Mary colours nearly the whole narrative of his life, as commonly told. After remaining for some time in the Franciscan monastery—the locality of which, we may remark, by the by, is not very clearly settled, it being doubtful whether it was in England, Scotland, or Ireland—he was removed to the university of Oxford. Here he soon distinguished himself by his ardour and proficiency in all the studies of the place, but particularly by so unrivalled a skill in logical and metaphysical quibbling, that he gained for himself the name of the Sophist, and was by many, we are told, already esteemed a greater philosopher than Aristotle himself. After a time he commenced the public teaching of his favourite sciences, and speedily attained such extraordinary celebrity, that pupils absolutely flocked to him in mobs. We are assured by various authorities, that his lectures used to be attended by thirty thousand auditors! But in regard to this matter, there is probably a great deal of truth in Anthony Wood's explanation, who tells us, that of this immense multitude many were merely "varlets, who, pretending to be scholars,

¹ An anecdote very similar to this, we may just remark, is also told of Albertus Magnus, who flourished a short time before Duns Scotus.

shuffled themselves in, and did act much villany in the university, by thieving," and other irregularities which he names; adding, "they lived under no discipline, neither had any tutors, but only for fashion's sake, would sometimes thrust themselves into the schools at ordinary lectures, and, when they went to perform any mischief, then would be accounted scholars, that so they might free themselves from the jurisdiction of the burghers." The number of students at this time at the university of Bologna, is stated to have been ten thousand; and, in 1453, a contemporary writer relates that there were twenty-five thousand at that of Paris.

The most memorable event in the life of Duns, took place on occasion of a visit he made to Paris, during the period of his residence at Oxford. Remembering, we may suppose, his promise to the Virgin, in whose honour he had already written doughtily and largely, he determined to make his appearance in the French capital, to defend against all oppugners the celebrated article of faith touching her alleged freedom from original sin, of which he has sometimes even been accounted the first deviser and promulgator. A day having been accordingly appointed, for a public disputation on the subject, before the university, Duns presented himself; and never was known any thing more admirable than the skill with which he encountered alone a host of opponents, or more splendid than his triumph. He allowed the adverse party, in the first place, to state their case without interruption; and it may give the reader some idea of the fertility of the scholastic logic, when he is informed that, upon this occasion, the single point which had to be made out was supported, on the part of these ingenious reasoners, by just two hundred arguments! At last, when they had confessed themselves, as well they might, after such an expenditure, fairly exhausted, the redoubtable Duns, nothing dismayed, rose in his turn; and, wonderful as it may seem, is said to have actually gone over, without ever hesitating for a moment, the whole two hundred arguments, in the order in which they had been stated, and, when he had completely demolished them, one after another, to have concluded with such a cloud of altogether irrefutable ones, in favour of his own side of the question, that all present were converted to his opinion, and he was unanimously declared to have placed the matter for ever beyond the reach of controversy. He is described by an eye-witness, Pelbartus a Temeswar, to have, on this occasion, "snapped the knottiest syllogisms, as Sampson did the bonds of Delilah." He was immediately graduated by the title of 'the subtle doctor'; and an order of the university was passed, that no one should in future be admitted to any degree whatever, without previously swearing to defend the doctrine which had thus been so triumphantly established. Such, at least, is the story told by the different writers, who, in more recent times, have attempted to collect the particulars of the life of Scotus. But it is not a little curious that in the subtle doctor's own commentary on the Sentences of Peter the Lombard, we find him delivering his opinion upon the subject in question, in terms very different from what this statement would lead us to expect. Instead of any decisive assertion of the doctrine which he has the credit of having so victoriously vindicated, his language here is that of ignorance and doubt. "The probability," he says, "is rather in favour of the Virgin having been conceived *without* original sin, but the

author determines nothing : " *Conclusio est negativa, si placet, nihil enim determinat auctor.*" (p. 262). What makes Duns's hesitation on this occasion the more remarkable is, that it is, as far as we have observed, the only instance in which he has the modesty to confess himself in doubt throughout the volume. The learned Luke Wadding, a Spanish Franciscan, but an Irishman by birth, who writes a life of Duns Scotus, tells us, with all imaginable gravity, that, as Duns was proceeding along one of the streets of Paris, on his way to this famous disputation, he came up to a certain image of the Virgin, and kneeling down before it, begged for aid and support from his celestial patroness, in the combat he was about to wage in her cause, upon which the image actually answered him by nodding its head. A fact, adds the historian, which it is impossible to doubt, since any one who will take the trouble of going to Paris, may behold the image with its head still inclined, in perpetual commemoration and testimony of the miracle ! One wonders to read such a passage as this, in a work written about the middle of the seventeenth century ; but the same tale is repeated, with equal gravity, even by subsequent writers.²

Wadding, by-the-by, labours hard to prove Scotus to have been an Irishman,—a theory which his common designation by no means refutes, since the name of Scotland was at one time given to Ireland, as well as to the northern part of Britain. He acknowledges, however, that the matter is by no means perfectly clear, quaintly remarking, that "the subtlety of Duns may be said to have commenced even before his birth, since no one has yet been able to track him to his first appearance in our world." An old English translator of one of his smaller works,³ who contends strenuously that he was born south of the Tweed, advances a theory of his own in explanation of the epithet Scotus, or Scot, which he maintains is merely a corruption of the word *Cot*, the name being originally and properly Duns-cot, after some village so called in Northumberland. This writer dedicates his work to a Mr Dunce, a north-county squire, whom he affirms to be of the same family that produced the subtle doctor. We do not know whether any remnant of the race is still to be found in those parts. While upon this subject, too, we may mention that Duns Scotus is supposed by many to have the honour of being the true parent of the common English *dunce*, the synonyme of dolt or blockhead, the term having been applied to his followers, the Scotists, as an epithet of opprobrium, by their opponents, the Thomists, or disciples of St Thomas Aquinas. Some time after this disputation, Duns took a final leave of Oxford, and settled at Paris, continuing his duties as a professor in the university there, and teaching with undiminished applause. When he had resided, however, in that city only about a year, as he was one day walking, attended by several of his pupils, in a field in the neighbourhood, a letter was put into his hands from the general or principal of the religious order to which he belonged, commanding his presence immediately at Cologne. Without even returning to the city to collect his books, or bid adieu to his friends, he set out on his journey on the instant. It was in his usual mendicant attire, barefooted, and in rags, and with that cord about his waist which, as one of the poets of the

² See Life by Colganus, Antwerp, 1655.

³ *Idiota's*, or Duns' Contemplations of Divine Love. Paris, 1662.

day expresses it, was his kingly crown, that this extraordinary genius approached the gates of Cologne, where he was met by a solemn procession of the clergy and the magistrates, attended by an immense concourse of people of all degrees, and, being placed in a triumphal chariot, was welcomed to the city, even, says one of his historians, as Plato of old was welcomed to Syracuse by his royal friend Dionysius. At Cologne, as formerly at Oxford and Paris, pupils crowded around him from all parts; but his brilliant career was now rapidly drawing to a close. One day after he had been exerting himself in teaching, he was suddenly struck with apoplexy, which proved fatal in the course of a few hours; and thus perished, in his forty-second, or, as other accounts say, in his thirty-fourth year, the man who had, even at that early period of life, already attained to be universally reputed, both for genius, learning, and piety, the wonder and chief glory of his age. Wadding has published an edition of the works of Duns Scotus, which extends to twelve thick volumes in folio—an amazing mass of literary labour to have been accomplished in so short a life. His admirers extol his genius as of unrivalled acuteness; and there can be no question that, both for talent and erudition, he was one of the most remarkable of that very remarkable class of men to which he belongs. He lived during the very height and fury of the scholastic mania; and his works, accordingly, present a picture of the disputatious temper of the philosophy which he cultivated in all its extravagance. But still there is the inspiration of an active and penetrating intellect in many of his conceptions, which shows what he might have performed, had he been born in a more fortunate age. As it was, not only his contemporaries, but many succeeding generations, looked upon him as one of the greatest men that had ever appeared. Many of his followers, in the church especially, although he was never canonized, regarded his memory with the veneration usually paid to that of a saint; and Baptista Mantuanus, in one of his epigrams, goes so far as to say of him, that, for his services to the faith, both religion and God himself are debtors to Scotus. A complete copy of the twelve volumes of his works, published by Wadding, is an extremely rare collection.

William Occam.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1280.—DIED A. D. 1350.

THE most distinguished of the disciples of Scotus was William Occam, born at Ockham in Surrey about the year 1280.¹ While yet a youth he entered into the order of St Francis, and prosecuted his studies with great vigour and success, first at Oxford, and afterwards at Paris. In both these universities, he enjoyed the opportunity of hearing the scholastic prelections of Scotus, many of whose opinions he retained through life, and amongst others, the position which makes the distinction of right from wrong depend on the will of the supreme Being. But he by no means reposed implicit faith in all the doctrines of his illustrious master. On the contrary, he expressly avowed his determination to reject

¹ Bruckeri Hist. Phil. iii. 846.

human authority, even that of his master, whenever any doctrine appeared to him repugnant to reason: "I do not support this opinion," says he, "because he lays it down, but because I think it true, and therefore, if he has elsewhere maintained the opposite, I care not." This language, it has been justly observed, "now so trivial that no slave can disclaim it, and every schoolboy would think it too commonplace to be repeated, was, in the fourteenth century, far more important than the most brilliant discoveries, and contained the germ of all reformation in philosophy and religion. Luther and Bacon were actuated by no other principle in the deliverance of the human understanding."

The principal question upon which Occam opposed his master Scotus, was that concerning universals as they were called. He held that the words which are called universal, are to be considered as signs which equally indicate any one out of many particular objects. "This opinion," says one of the most accomplished metaphysicians of the present age in his review of Stewart's Introduction to the Encyclopædia, "was revived by Hobbes, Berkeley, Hume, Hartley, and Condillac; abused with great ingenuity by Horne Tooke; and followed by Mr Stewart, who has on this occasion made common cause with philosophers in whose ranks he is not usually found. Few metaphysical speculations have been represented as more important by its supporters and opponents. Perhaps, however, when the terms are explained, and when the darkness is dissipated with which controversy never fails to cloud a long contested question, it may appear that this subject has not yet been examined on true principles. But whatever may be the future fate of the controversy, it cannot be denied, that the reasonings in defence of Nominalism are stated with singular ingenuity, and even perspicuity, in the passages of Occam which now lie before us. Among many other observations, perfectly unlike his age, we find him limiting the philosophy of the human mind to what can be known by experience of its operations, and utterly excluding all questions relating to the nature of the thinking principle. 'We are conscious that we understand and will; but whether these acts be performed by an immaterial and incorruptible principle, is a matter of which we are not conscious, and which is no farther the subject of demonstration than it can be known by experience. All attempts to prove it must be founded on the assumption of something doubtful.' But the most remarkable of all the reasonings of this original thinker, are those which he employs against the then received doctrine 'of sensible and intelligible species' (or *appearances*) of things which are the immediate objects of the mind when we perceive or think. These images or likenesses of objects alone, were supposed to be contemplated by the senses and the understanding, and to be necessary to perception and mental apprehension. Biel, a follower of Occam, in expounding the doctrine of his master, tells us, that 'a species was the similitude or image of a thing known, naturally remaining in the mind after it ceases to be the object of actual knowledge; or otherwise, that likeness of a thing, which is a previous condition of knowledge, which excites knowledge in the understanding, and which may remain in the mind in the absence of the thing represented.'² The supposed necessity of such *species*, moving from the

² Gabriel Biel, li. Sent. in Tenn.

object to the organ of sense, is, according to Occam, founded on the assumed principle, that what moves must be in contact with what is moved. But this principle he asserts to be false; and he thinks it sufficiently disproved by the fact, that the loadstone attracts iron to it without touching it. He thought nothing necessary to sensation but the power of sensation, and the thing which is its object. All intermediate beings he regarded as arbitrary figments. We cannot pursue these quotations farther. It is easy to conceive his application of a similar mode of reasoning to 'the *intelligible species*,' which, indeed, he who denied abstract ideas, had already virtually rejected. It is plain, indeed, that Occam denied both parts of this opinion; not only that which is called Aristotelian, concerning the *species* supposed to move from outward objects to the organs of sense; but also that which, under the name of the Ideal theory, has been imputed by Dr Reid and Mr Stewart to Descartes, and all succeeding philosophers, who are considered as teaching the actual *resemblance* of our thoughts to external things, and thereby laying their philosophy open to the inferences afterwards made from it by Berkeley about the origin of our perceptions, and by Hume against the possibility of knowledge. The philosophical reader will be struck with the connexion between this rejection of 'images or likenesses of things' as necessary to perception; and the principle, that we know nothing of mind but its actions; and cannot fail, in a system of reasoning of which these are specimens, illustrated by an observation of the less observed appearances of outward nature, and animated by a disregard of authority in the search for truth, to perceive tendencies towards an independent philosophy, to be one day built by reason upon a wide foundation of experience."

Occam took a conspicuous part in those violent disputes which agitated the church during the pontificate of John XXII. from 1316 to 1334. He opposed the ambitious pretensions of the pope, and defended generally the rights of the civil magistrate against the usurped prerogatives of the church, with great spirit and success. In 1322, he was chosen provincial of the Franciscans in England, and afterwards definitor of the whole order of St Francis, in which latter capacity he was present at the general chapter held at Perusium in Tuscany, where he boldly defended the principles of the 'spiritual brethren,' as they were called, which the pope had condemned as heretical by two solemn decrees.³ He also impugned with much vehemence a favourite opinion of John XXII. that the souls of good men are not admitted to the beatific vision and full happiness of heaven until after the resurrection. For such contumacious conduct, the holy father cited him to Rome, but instead of obeying the summons, Occam took shelter at the court of Lewis of Bavaria, who had himself been deposed and excommunicated by the pope, and who received his fellow in misfortune in a very gracious manner. In this retirement Occam composed several of his works, particularly his compendium of the heresies of Pope John, of which he enumerated no fewer than seventy-seven.⁴ He also published several treatises in defence of his patron, and against that maxim of the papal court, first promulgated by Boniface VIII. in 1301, that "all emperors, kings, and princes, are subject to the supreme authority of the pope,

³ Dupin, cent. xiv.

⁴ Tanner, p. 555.

and that in temporals as well as spirituals." His works against the papal authority are represented by Selden as "the best that had been written in former ages on the ecclesiastical power."

During the life of the emperor, Occam defied the rage of three successive pontiffs; but on the death of Lewis in 1347, he no longer found himself in a capacity to brave the papal thunders, and was constrained to make his peace with the church by many humiliating concessions. By the interest of the Franciscans, he obtained absolution for all past offences from Clement VI.; but he did not long survive his abjuration of those opinions which it had been the great object of his life to establish and promulgate. He died at Capua in Italy, on the 20th of September 1350. His writings are voluminous but scarce. An account of them is given in Tenneman's 'History of Philosophy,' vol. viii. part 2. published at Leipsic in 1811.

Walter Burleigh,

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1320.

AMONG the men of extraordinary ability who flourished in the age when the passion for scholastic learning was at its height, Burleigh holds a conspicuous station. Little is known of his early life, or of the methods he pursued in attaining that high rank to which he rose in the learned world. It appears to have been one of the peculiarities of the period, that only men of a certain turn or habit of mind had a chance of making their way to eminence. The rigid forms of study and reasoning to which intellects of every degree of strength, and every character, were subjected, tended to destroy all those tenderer germs of original thought, which though not essential perhaps to the existence of truth, give so much grace and beauty to the whole intellectual world. Few things are better adapted to prove the power of individual peculiarities over external force than the variety of styles which may be seen in the writings of the most devoted disciples of Aristotle: but it was only men of the hardest minds that could endure the discipline they had to undergo; the rest shrunk, withered into useless weeds, and even those who lived through the process, appeared possessed rather of a strong rigidity, than a genial, living strength. Burleigh was one of the few who succeeded in retaining somewhat of his natural character, and enjoyed among his cotemporaries the singular honour of being named 'the perspicuous doctor'. He studied first at Oxford, and then at Paris, where he was a fellow-pupil with Occam in the school of Duns Scotus. On his return to England, he became a most determined opponent of the system of his master, and acquired a reputation for acuteness and learning, which recommended him to the notice of Edward the Third, of whom he was for some time the preceptor. There were few branches of literature or science on which his fruitful mind had not been employed. Logic and metaphysics, in which he chiefly excelled, did not prevent his becoming noted for his skill in natural philosophy, on the one hand, and his profound acquaintance with theology on the other. His works consequently embrace a vast variety of subjects; but his princi-

pal productions are in the form of commentaries on the metaphysical and ethical works of Aristotle. The list of these treatises affords a remarkable evidence of the laborious attention with which the scholars of this age pursued their painful and abstruse labours; but it shows at the same time how far removed the literature of the schools was from the path of practical utility, and how impossible it would have been for its greatest admirer to have said of its most accomplished professor, that he brought philosophy from its higher sphere to converse with mortals. Only one of Burleigh's works has escaped almost utter oblivion: this is a tract entitled, '*De Vita et Moribus Philosophorum*,' and it is not unworthy of preservation, as giving a curious specimen of the manner in which the masters of ancient wisdom were viewed by the learned of the 14th century.

John of Gaddesden.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1320.

THE earliest English physician whose works have been printed, was Gilbert English, who flourished in the 13th century, and whose skill in medicine is highly extolled by Leland and Bale. Like his predecessor, Albricius, he appears to have mastered the science of the Arabians, and Dr Freind is of opinion, that "he took the bulk of what he compiled from the writings of the Arabians," which were, in fact, at this time, the only depositaries of science known to Europeans. John de Gaddesden is the next medical writer of this country whose works are before the public. He flourished in the early part of the 14th century, and studied at Merton college, Oxford. "Having acquired," says Leland, "a thorough knowledge of philosophy, he applied with great ardour to the study of medicine, in which he made so great proficiency, that he was justly esteemed the great luminary of his age. He wrote a large and erudite work on medicine, to which, on account of its excellence, the illustrious title of '*The Medical Rose*,' was given." The title of the book is somewhat different from Leland's account of it. It runs thus in the original: '*Rosa Anglica quatuor libris distincta, de morbis particularibus, de febribus, de chirurgia, de pharmacopeia*.' It is a singular work, and may be referred to as exhibiting the whole system of surgery and physic practised in England in the 14th century. In treating of each disease, Gaddesden gives, first, the etymology of its name, and a general description of it; 2dly, the symptoms; 3dly, the treatment. On the latter head, Gaddesden is always extremely full; in fact, as Dr Freind observes, he seems to have sedulously collected all the receipts and nostrums which he had ever met with or heard of, and, with little attention to the rationale of medicine, to have incorporated the whole in one vast system of therapeutics. He was a great dealer in secrets, and possessed some with which, if we are to trust his own account, he performed absolute miracles; he affirms that he possessed great skill in physiognomy, and informs us, that it was his intention to write a treatise of chiromancy. In fact, Gaddesden was the universal philosopher of his day: physic, meta-

physica, surgery, poetry, philology,—nothing came amiss to him ; and when one art failed, he was always sure to have another at hand with which he could at least impose on the credulity of mankind. Dr Freind has exposed, with much humour and effect, the extreme empiricism of Gaddesden's practice. What can be more whimsical, for example, than the following treatment of a patient in the small-pox ? “ After this”—that is, immediately after the eruption appears—“ cause the whole body of your patient be wrapped in red scarlet cloth, or in any other red cloth, and cause every thing about his bed be made red. This is an admirable mode of cure. It was in this manner I treated the son of the noble king of England when he had the small-pox ; and I cured him without leaving any marks.” Nothing less ridiculous is his treatment of epilepsy, though in this instance, at least, he was not singular in his practice : “ Because,” says he, “ there are many children and others affected with the epilepsy, who cannot take medicines, let the following method be observed, which is recommended by Constantine, Walter, Bernard, Gilbert, and others, which I too have found to be effectual, whether the patient was a demoniac, a lunatic, or an epileptic. When the patient and his parents have fasted three days, let him be conducted to a church. There, if he be of proper age, and in his right senses, let him confess. Then let him hear mass on Friday, during the fast of Quatuor temporum, and also on Saturday. On Sunday, let a good and pious priest read over his head, in the church, the gospel which is appointed to be read in September in the time of vintage, and let the patient wear the same about his neck, and he will be cured. The gospel is : ‘ This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.’ ” Such were the methods of cure practised by a man who stood at the head of the medical school of England in the 14th century, whom princes consulted and honoured, whom poets celebrated, and whom Leland and Ovaringius extol as the profoundest philosopher, the most skilful physician, and the most illustrious man of his age ! In forming an estimate, however, of Gaddesden, or any of his contemporaries, we must take into account the general ignorance and universal superstition of the age in which they lived. Besides the practice of his profession, Gaddesden held a prebendary in St Paul's,—a sinecure place doubtless, for so convenient a mode of rewarding personal services was not unknown to the dispensers of patronage even in these incorrupt times. Of his ‘ *Rosa Anglica*, ’ there are two editions : one printed in folio at Venice, in 1502,—the other in quarto, Aug. Vind. 1595.

Sir John Mandeville.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1300.—DIED A. D. 1372.

THE fervour of religious enthusiasm which had carried crowds of humble pilgrims and steel-clad warriors to the Holy Land, was not yet exhausted when this remarkable man began his career. But the motives which influenced him seem to have been altogether distinct from those which had hitherto operated on the minds of travellers to the

remote East. A desire of information, and that restlessness of mind with which it is so frequently blended, prompted him to pursue a course which it had till now required the irresistible inducements of devotion to undertake with courage. He may, therefore, perhaps be fairly regarded as the first of our countrymen to whom the name of traveller ought strictly to be applied; and when either the extent of his wanderings are remembered, or the few facilities which the age afforded for pursuing them in safety, he may be considered, with equal justice, as one of the most enterprising of his class.

It has not been ascertained in what year he was born, but there are documents to prove that it was at or very near the commencement of the fourteenth century, and that Saint Albans was his birth place. The family from which he descended is represented as having been of the highest respectability; the same scanty traditions relating to him, acquaint us that he was brought up as a physician, and that he exercised his profession for some years, but was at length so strongly excited by the desire of seeing distant countries, that in 1332 he bade farewell to his native land, and commenced a tour which, with his stay in the different regions that attracted his curiosity, occupied no less a period than thirty-four years. During this time, he traversed the chief parts of Asia, Egypt, and Libya, spent three years at Pekin in China, attended the grand khan of Cathay in his wars, and even served as a soldier himself under the soldan of Egypt. The variety of adventures with which he must have met in such a journey would have been amply sufficient to satisfy his readers, and it is only to be regretted that the interesting and valuable information he might have conveyed should have been sacrificed to the extravagancies which disfigure his journal. From the length of time he expended in his wanderings, from the close intercourse which he seems to have kept up with the natives of the countries he explored, and the skill he acquired in their languages, he was qualified to enlarge the knowledge of his countrymen on subjects of the most important practical utility. But either his mind was deficient in acuteness, or he was unwilling to diminish the amazement with which the common stories respecting the east were received by the people. Thus the most extravagant assertions are made with an appearance of faith which is almost as startling as the wonders themselves. Nature is represented under aspects which set at defiance all the laws by which it may reasonably be supposed she is every where governed. Circumstances occur which the sober earnestness of the narrative sets forth as worthy of all credit, but which are scarcely more credible than those of the wildest romance. The journal, therefore, of Sir John would be worthy of little attention were it not for the light which it throws upon the taste of the English at the time when it was written. In the preface to the work, he speaks with some eloquence on the claims which the land of Palestine has to the devout attention of Christian men and states as his motive for describing it, that a long time had passed since the route thither was familiar or general, and that a number of persons desired to hear it described. He then formally declares, "I, John Mandeville, knight, who was born in England in the town of St Albans, passed the sea in the year 1332, on Saint Michael's day; and there remained a long time, and went through many lands and many provinces, kingdoms,

and isles, and have passed through Turkie, and through Armony the Little and Great, through Tartary, Jury, Araby, Egypt the High and Low, through Liby, Chalde, and a great part of Æthiope, through Amazony, through Jude the Less and the More, and through many other isles which are about Jude, where many people dwell of divers shape. Of the men of which lands I shall speak plainly, and shall declare part of the things I have seen." He then proceeds to describe the way to Jerusalem, "on horse, on foot, or by sea," prefacing his account with the remark, that he had "ridden it and passed it with good observation." Many of the principal towns on the road are mentioned in order, and the care is every where evident which the author took not to omit any legend which might please the lovers of the marvellous. The description given of Bethlehem may serve to make the reader acquainted with his style:—"From Hebron," says he, "men go to Bethlehem in half a day, for it is but five miles, and it is a very fair way and through pleasant woods. Bethlehem is but a little city, long and narrow, and was walled and enclosed with a great ditch; it hath been formerly called Ephrata, as holy writ saith, '*Ecce audivimus cum in Ephrata*,' &c., that is, 'Lo we heard of the same at Ephrata.' And near the end of the city towards the east, is a very fair and goodly church, which has many towers and pinnacles, being strongly built. Within that church are four and forty great marble pillars; and not far from this church is a field which flourished very strangely, as you shall hear. The cause is, forasmuch as a fair maiden that was accused wrongfully for that she had done dishonestly, for which cause she was doomed to die, and to be burnt in that place, to which she was led. And as the wood began to burn about her, she made her prayer to our Lord, as she was not guilty of that thing, that he would help her, that it might be known to all men. And having thus prayed, she entered the fire, and those branches that were burning became red roses, and those that were not kindled became white roses, and these were the first roses that any man ever saw: And so was the maiden saved through the grace of God, wherefore that field is called the field that God flourished, for that it was full of roses." The wonders which he relates of the isles in the eastern seas are less pleasing to the imagination. Thus, the people of the isle of Raso are said to hang their friends who are supposed to be near dying on the boughs of trees, in order that the birds might eat them, saying, it was better that the birds—which are angels of God—should eat them than the worms. In another island hounds are said to be kept to strangle the sick, which, after they have been thus destroyed, are eaten for 'venison.' The isle of Macumeran is celebrated for being inhabited by men and women who have heads like dogs' heads. In Dodyn the people, it is said, beat even their sick parents to death, and then assemble all their friends and relatives to feast on their remains. Other islands are distinguished like that of Macumeran for the monstrosities of human shape which they produce, and one is especially mentioned, the inhabitants of which have no heads, and to supply the defect have their eyes in their shoulders and their mouths in their breasts. Numerous instances might be produced of fables of another class, but the above specimen of Sir John's veracious gravity will enable the reader to form a tolerably correct idea of the privilege which travellers assumed to themselves

in the fourteenth century, or rather, perhaps, of the taste which prevailed at that period, and which a man desirous of reputation as a traveller dared not venture to oppose. Steele and Addison unite in celebrating the fertility of the venerable tourist's imagination, and observe, that among all the authors of his kind he deserves the foremost place for "the copiousness of his invention and the greatness of his genius." It has, however, been discovered, that Sir John merits less praise for originality than the applause of these wits implies. From the comparison which has been instituted between his journal and that of Oderic de Portenau, it is found that he borrowed whole pages from that writer, while most of his marvellous tales are traced with equal clearness to the old romances, which were then generally well-known on the continent.

Notwithstanding the medley of extravagance which occupied so large a portion of this journal, Sir John enjoyed an extensive reputation both in England and abroad. Some of his relations, indeed, are ascribed to the monks, who are supposed to have added them of their own accord; and it is not improbable, but that while he condescended to amuse the ignorant with fables, he obtained the respect of the more enlightened by a juster account of what he had seen and heard. It was chiefly to alleviate the unpleasant sensation of languor which he suffered after his return to England that he wrote the account of his journey, but the amusement which it afforded him was not sufficient to cure his ennui, and after a vain endeavour to remain contented at home, he again set out for the continent, and repaired to Liege, where he took up his residence, and where he died in the year 1372. A handsome monument in the principal church of that city, records his honourable descent, and the faith in which he died. His name richly deserves to be remembered; however little he did to promote the interests of science, he was a man of singular resolution, and contributed, if he did nothing farther, to awaken a spirit of curiosity and enterprise. It is evident, from the character of his journal, that knowledge of every species was subjected at the time he wrote to the sway of superstition; and when it is remembered that in little more than a hundred years from that period, Vasco de Gama rendered the remote shores of India familiar to every merchant in Europe, and Columbus had successfully traversed the Atlantic in search of shores before unheard of, the visionary tales of Sir John Mandeville, taken as a starting point, will serve to show in the strongest manner the extent to which in one century improvement may be carried. A similar inference will be drawn from his narrative when it is recollected, that at the time when his stories of Indians without heads, and other such marvels, were received with delight in England, the Venetians and Genoese viewed those countries as the proper seat of their commerce, and would have been as little inclined to credit his stories as they were ready to follow the suggestions of the boldest trafficker. As England was enabled to extend its commerce, the narratives of travellers were filled with contents of a very different nature, and those of Sir John Mandeville were speedily forgotten by all but the most curious inquirers into the state of our early literature.

Robert Longlande.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1350.

It deserves to be spoken to the praise of poetry, that those who have cultivated the art have, in numerous instances, shown themselves very superior to the age in which they lived. Philosophers have frequently received this praise; and every anticipation, however slight, of improvements in science,—every glance they have given at a world advancing in light and intelligence,—has been justly regarded as a token of the loftiest intellectual power. But the noble elevation of poetical freedom,—its superiority to the fashions of the day,—its enmity to real prejudices and whatever else betokens an advance on the age,—are far less carefully noted; and poetry is thus deprived of the credit which in some instances has been remarkably its due. This is especially the case with more than one of our early English writers, who, living in an iron age, when superstition was at its height, when every art that speculation could invent to keep the people in ignorance was exercised, stood boldly forth from among their brethren, and ventured to proclaim the laws of plain sense and reason. Robert Longlande belongs eminently to this number, and it is a matter of regret that tradition has not preserved more memorials of a man who deserves so well of his country and posterity. Antiquaries differ as to the precise period when he flourished, but the dates 1350 and 1362 point out with some degree of certainty the time at which he completed the work to which he owes his fame. It is also known, that he was a fellow of Oriel college, Oxford, and a secular priest. To the latter circumstance may probably be ascribed some portion of the freedom and intelligence, and still more the keen, biting sarcasm, which characterize his poem. The opposition which long prevailed between the secular and regular clergy, combined with the greater intercourse with society which the former enjoyed, gave to that class of the clerical order a very important advantage over their monastic brethren. Obligated to defend themselves and their conduct by continual appeals from the prejudices which had been fostered by the long reign of darkness to those practical rules of wisdom which it was their interest to inculcate, they naturally acquired a readiness in judging of men and affairs which could scarcely fail of enlarging their views, and rendering them useful instructors. To a man of good natural powers it must have afforded an immense advantage to stand in this position. While his professional character would give him innumerable opportunities of studying the world, it would prevent his being ruined with it; and while he would enjoy much of the reverence with which all orders of the clergy were then regarded, he would be free from the trammels which the regulars wore as the price of their respectability. That Longlande possessed ample qualifications for making the best use of his experience, his work abundantly proves, and the labours of critics have rarely been more profitably employed than they have been in elucidating or correcting the pages of this author. The 'Vision of Pierce Plowman' is a satire on the most conspicuous follies and superstitions of his contemporaries. No rank or profession escapes his bold and sweeping sar-

casm. He looks on the world with the eye of a severe moralist, but not without the gay feeling of a poet. His blows are quick and heavy, but he fights with a well-polished weapon; and while we may fairly give him the honour due to a useful instructor, we may, at the same time, consider his poem as deserving a high rank, as such, among the earliest of our classics. His own order suffers most severely under his hand, but he was too good a satirist to confine his views to one class of mankind, and in the introduction to the poem he represents himself as contemplating a vast and mixed multitude, composed of men of every age and degree:—

“ And as I beheld on hey, est on to the sonne,
I saw a towr on a toft, ryaly emaked,
A depe dale be nethe, a donjoun therein,
With depe dykys and dyrke, and dredful of sygth;
A fayr feld ful of folke fond I ther betwene,—
Of al maner of men, the mene and the ryche,
Werkyng and wanderynge, as the world askyth;
Summe put hem to the plow, pleyd hem ful seelde,
In sytyng and sowyng swonken full harde,
And wan that wastors with gloteny dystroid;
And somme put hem to pryde,” &c. &c.

This vision and the others, in the description of which the poem consists, was seen by the author, as he represents, while he was sleeping, after having enjoyed a long and solitary ramble among the Malverne hills. In this respect he has followed the plan of more than one other early poet; and the student of Italian literature will remember that the famous Brunetto Latini, the preceptor of Dante, has formed his principal work on this system. The love of allegory rendered such a method of introducing the subject almost necessary, or, at least, gave a species of natural existence to the personages of the fable, and a verisimilitude to the relations, which they would not otherwise have possessed. In the land of dreams we may allow a man to converse with Avarice, Bribery, &c., as living visible personages; and if the poet has the art to lead his reader over the shadowy threshold, his descriptions thenceforth assume the form and air of realities. We find in Longlande's work some personifications which we with difficulty admit in the present day to intercourse with our fancy. Simony and Theology have too many grave associations in their train to flow easily into verse; but in the age when Longlande wrote, there was little nicety of taste in this respect, and whatever could be named was considered as lawfully subject to the process of personification. Thus, among his chief characters are Do-Well, Do-Better, and Do-Best; Do-Evil is another; Wit and Thought are both active characters in the plot; See-Well, Say-Well, and Hear-Well, have also distinct offices to perform. The last mentioned personages are honoured with the appellation of Sir; and accompanying them is 'Sir Godfray Go-Well.' The great object of their labour is to preserve the Soul, represented as a lady with the name of Anima, and the following lines will show how skilfully the author manages his numerous train of shadows:—

“ Sir Dowel dwellith, coth Witt, nogt a day hennes
In a castel that kynde (nature) made, of four kynnes thinges;
Of erthe and of aier is hit made, medled togedris

With wynde and with watir, wittirly enjoyned.
 Kynde hath closed thereynne, craftely withalle
 A Lemman that he loveth, lyk to hym selve,
 Anima she hatte, ac Envy hire hateth,
 A proud priker of Fraunce, *princeps hujus mundi*,
 And wold wynne hire away with wiles and he myghte;
 Ac Kynde knoweth this wel, and kepith hire the bettere,
 And doth hire with Sire Dowel is duk of these marchis;
 Dobest is hire damsel, Sire Dowellys doughter,
 To serve this lady leely, both late and ratha.
 Dobest is above both a bieschoppis pere,
 That he bitt mot be don he reuleth hem alle.
 Anima that lady, is led by his leryng;
 Ac the constable of that castel, that kepith al the watche,
 Is a wise knightte withalle, Sire Inwitt he hatte,
 And hath fyve fair sones bi his first wyf,
 Sire Seewel and Saywel, and Huyrewel the end,
 Sir Worchewel with thyn hond, a wyghtte man of strengthe,
 And Sire Godfray Gowel, grete lordis forsothe
 These fyve ben y sette, to save this lady Anima
 Till Kynde come or send," &c.

The boldness of the poet, as well as his ingenuity, is shown in many spirited descriptions of the luxury of the clergy, and of the corruptions to which it led. Destitute as we are of all other means of judging of Longlande's personal character, we have so clear an image in his poetry of a free and lofty minded man,—of one whose sagacity gave vigour to his talents, and whose sense of moral right was equal both to his talents and his sagacity,—that we can scarcely be mistaken in ascribing to him a portion of the praise belonging to those qualities.

John Gower.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1326.—DIED A. D. 1402.

On arriving at the name of Gower, the literary historian finds himself entering on a new and wider track of inquiry. Poetry—when that celebrated man began to write—had been long cultivated in this country; and the metrical romances of 'Sir Guy,' of 'the Squire of Low Degree,' 'Sir Degore,' and others, evince considerable power of imagination, and no slight mastery over the strong but yet unsettled idioms of the Saxon English. The poems of Adam Davie, who lived at the commencement of the fourteenth century, of Richard Hampole, an Augustine monk, who wrote about forty years later, and those of Robert Longlande, the author of the far-famed 'Vision of Pierce Plowman,' connect the period of wild fanciful romance with that of Gower and Chaucer. But these early productions created a taste which they could not satisfy. There were glimpses of beauty in the rude conceptions they embodied,—an occasional sweetness in the construction of the hardy verse; but these only made the readers of those times long for demonstrations of a power which the art of the poet had not yet attained. It required a period of luxury and refinement to give that polish to language which renders it a sure and mirror-like medium for the operations of genius. The same refinement was necessary to give the poet a field sufficiently wide and fruitful in subjects for the exer-

cise of his talent. In a rude age, it is only the wildest creations of the imagination which can secure attention, and these, however modified, will always belong to the same class, and be imbued with the same spirit. Nothing can be more erroneous than the common notion that an uncivilized period is the most favourable to the development of the imagination. The freedom with which it is allowed to act, is far more than counterbalanced by the barrenness and poverty of ideas with which that freedom is accompanied. Imagination, like all other faculties of the mind, requires nourishment; but it is only in civilized communities—in which, though passion may be concealed, there are stronger sympathies at work, more varied combinations of feeling, more both to fear and love,—that it can find enough to preserve it in a state, not of seeming, but of real activity. Hence it is, that the poetry of barbarous times is so generally monotonous though wild, and that the grandest triumphs of the imagination have been witnessed in ages of advanced civilization. Homer, Æschylus, and his followers,—Shakspeare and Milton,—bear ample testimony to the truth of this observation; and if their works be compared with the productions of authors who lived in more unpolished periods, it will be at once seen how little the imagination owes to a barbarous freedom to what it does to polish and cultivation.

Gower and his distinguished cotemporary were the first English poets who enjoyed all the advantages to be reaped from an improved age, from a highly refined education, and from constant intercourse with the noblest personages of the land. The reign of Edward the Third is celebrated in our national annals, as not less remarkable for the splendour of its events than the luxury which it introduced among the people. Every art by which domestic comfort could be increased was favoured by the wealthy populace, now growing into estimation as one of the orders of the state. The greater importance attached to the decisions of parliament conferred a respectability upon them which they had not before possessed, and hence not only diffused a general desire for the improvements of life, but taught them to appreciate better the qualifications of men of genius. While the people were thus prepared for a purer species of poetry than any that had yet been cultivated, and while the progress of intelligence was every day increasing its materials, and widening its range, the language was also undergoing an alteration strongly calculated to improve its harmony and flexibility. The growing pride of the nation, as well as its obvious interests, made the law which prohibited the further use of French in public deeds, as acceptable as it was politic. But the worst impediment to the refinement of the native language was thence removed. The Saxon words and idioms which yet stood out sharp and knotty obstacles to the smooth flow of its current, admitted of being worn down by the stream as it strengthened and enlarged itself; but the hitherto allowed superiority of French prevented any systematic attempts to improve it, and but for the conquests of Edward, and the advancement of national independence, the 'well of English undefiled' might never have existed.

It was under these circumstances that Gower and Chaucer laid the foundation of their school of poetry. The reign of Richard the Second gave a further impulse to the love of luxury, and the passion

for improvement which manifested themselves in the time of his predecessor. A spirit of religious independence and inquiry then began to appear, and the corruptions which had shortly before been the prey only of a few keen wits, were exposed by Wickliffe to the examination and censure of the people at large. The attention of all classes was thus by turns excited to political and religious inquiry, and the popular mind every where outgrew the garments which had been woven for it by ignorance and superstition.

We unfortunately possess few records of the personal history of Gower, but the little which is known of it shows him to have enjoyed from early youth all the literary advantages that could be procured in the period when he flourished. The patience of antiquaries has traced his origin to a wealthy family of the same name, settled at Stitenham, in Yorkshire; but the genealogy thus made out for him has been since disputed, and the descent of Gower may, therefore, be considered as still unsettled. That his education, however, was of the most liberal kind, is allowed by all his biographers, but where he received it is as much a matter of dispute as his origin. All we know is, that having finished his preliminary studies, he became a student of law in the Inner Temple, where he was distinguished for his great professional acquirements, and enjoyed the character of being as accomplished in general literature as he was in jurisprudence.

Both fortune and reputation rewarded the industry with which he cultivated his various talents. It has been conjectured by some writers that he received the honour of knighthood, and held a high legal appointment, but there is not sufficient foundation for this opinion, and the only well-authenticated part of the relation is, that he amassed considerable wealth, and that the greater portion of it was the fruit of his professional skill and perseverance. The knowledge of this circumstance explains the allusions which are made by Chaucer to the sober and moral character of his friend, and affords an interesting picture of a man of genius, combining, in this early period of our history, the love of letters with the regular habits of business.

It was while actively engaged in his professional occupations, that he composed the greater part of the works which entitle him to be ranked among the restorers of literature; and it has been recorded to his honour, that the chief object he had in view, in most of what he wrote, was the correction of those follies and vices which had already sprung from the luxury of the nobles, and the corresponding grossness of the people. He appears, however, to have advanced some way in his literary career, before he escaped the trammels which the fashionable love of French had imposed on so many minds. His principal work consists of three parts, the titles of which are, *Speculum Meditantis*, *Vox Clamantis*, *Confessio Amantis*. Of these, the first is written in French, and the ten books into which it is divided are occupied with general delineations of virtue and vice, with exhortations and advice to the reprobate for their restoration to hope, and with eulogies on the virtues to be cultivated in the marriage state. The second part, or the 'Vox Clamantis,' shows the disinclination he still entertained towards English, or at least his unwillingness to trust the fame he was desirous of reaping to his native tongue. Seven books of Latin elegiacs were the production of his laborious pen, under the above title, and they

exhibit, both by their style and subject, the fondness with which the scholars of the age still regarded the works of the monkish historians. The insurrection which shook the throne of the unfortunate Richard to its foundations, was the subject of this strange poem; but neither of the parts of Gower's great work here mentioned was ever printed; and had he produced nothing else, his name, it is most probable, would not now be known. It may, however, be conjectured, that in his employment of French and Latin, he was encouraged by the example of his celebrated cotemporaries in other countries. The fame which had been acquired by the earlier French bards, naturally rendered their language the favourite vehicle for poetry of the lighter species; and the veneration for Latin was still so great, that Petrarch, it is well known, scorned the idea of deriving glory from his compositions in modern Italian.

But the 'Confessio Amantis' amply vindicates our author's claim to the honour of an English writer, while the occasion of its being composed affords a proof of the fame he had acquired by the preceding parts of the poem. While rowing one day on the Thames, the king happened to meet him in the royal barge, and no sooner recognised his person, but gave him a signal to enter. The conversation between the monarch and the poet lasted for some time, and at its conclusion, his Majesty desired him to resume his poetical labours, expressing his wish in the significant phrase, that he would 'book some new thing.' The command of the king was forthwith obeyed, and Richard proved in this instance at least, a judicious patron. It would afford the reader little instruction to give an abstract of the 'Confessio Amantis.' An idea, however, of this singular work may be formed from its being simply stated, that it embodies the rules of love laid down by the three very distinct teachers on the subject, the romantic troubadours, the Platonic Italians, and the sensual Ovid. In illustration of these rules, the author expends all the learning of his age, and leaves uncited neither historian nor philosopher of whose works or even of whose name he had ever heard. The strange medley of learning thus brought together, has little beauty to the eye of a modern reader, but if the age be considered in which it appeared, we shall see reason to believe that it was regarded in a far different light by those for whom it was written. Knowledge had then as deep a charm as poetry, and the stories and mysteries told or alluded to by Gower, would thus excite an interest sufficiently strong to atone for any appearance of incongruity. But, besides the defects in the plan of the work, it has others of a more serious kind in its execution. It is generally allowed to exhibit very little invention, to be tame in expression, and to be deficient, in short, in most of those excellencies which characterise the productions of Chaucer. But it is not so much in relation to the genius of the writer as in reference to the age when it was produced, that a work of early date should be considered. The acute observation of Addison in respect to medals, pertains, in one particular, to ancient poems. "The intrinsic value," says he, "of an old coin does not consist in its metal, but its erudition;" and in the same manner, the interest of a poem such as that we are considering, depends less on the intrinsic beauty of the language or conception, than on its relative merit when compared with other productions

of the same, or an immediately preceding period. But in placing the 'Vox Amantis' by the side of the romances which, with few exceptions, were the only poems in the language, its superiority is at once evident. The author evinces a just sense of the dignity and fit application of his art: his subject is varied by all the digressions and ornaments, which it only wanted a higher degree of skill to render as splendid and attractive as they were various, and the sentiments are almost throughout full of good sense and dignity. So much valued was the work on these accounts, that Berthelette, the printer, did not hesitate to dedicate his edition to Henry the Eighth, and in his epistle to the monarch, says, among many other things equally laudatory, that "who-soever in reading it doth consider it well, shall find that it is plentifully staffed, and furnished with manifold eloquent reasons, sharp and quick arguments, and examples of great authority, persuading unto virtue, not only taken out of the poets, orators, history, writers, and philosophers, but also out of the Holy Scripture." To this he adds, that there is, in his opinion, "no man, but that he may, by reading of this work, get right great knowledge, as well for the understanding of many and divers customs, whose reasons, sayings, and histories, are translated into this work, as for the plenty of English words and vulgars, besides the furtherance of the life to virtue."

Gower was far advanced in years when he produced this poem. The most distinguished of his cotemporaries, Chaucer, had been his intimate friend from an early period of their life, and there are allusions in the works of each which show how sincerely both the one and the other esteemed the talents of his companion. Thus, in the 'Confessio Amantis,' the author makes Venus say—

— Grete well Chaucer whan ye mete,
As my disciple and my poete,
For in the flours of his youth,
In sundrie wise, as he well couth,
Of detees, and of songes glade,
The which he for my sake made,
The loude fulfilled is over all:
Whereof to him in speciall
Above all other I am most holde.

In a similar spirit of compliment Chaucer thus concludes his *Troilus and Cresside* :—

O moral Gower, this boke I directe
To the, and to the philosophical Strode,
To vouchsafe there hede is for to conecte,
Of your benignities and zelis gode.

That similarity of tastes and pursuits for which these distinguished men were conspicuous, was fully sufficient to unite them in friendship when there were so few others of like talent or disposition. But an additional cause has been assigned for their intimacy. While Chaucer possessed the patronage of John of Gaunt, Gower was equally attached to Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester, the other of the king's uncles who shared in the project of ruling the nation without the interference of the young monarch. In what degree our poet involved himself in political transactions cannot now be determined,

but it is probable that he, as well as Chaucer, took a deep interest in the events of the times, and that, learned and eloquent as he was, he exercised some influence over the party to which he belonged. Certain it is, that the death of the unfortunate duke of Gloucester was openly and pathetically lamented by him in his poems, and there is reason to think, that he lost no opportunity of expressing his dislike to the measures of Richard's government. His good sense, his prudent and virtuous character, would naturally make him the opponent of violence and licentiousness, the too prominent features of that unfortunate monarch's reign; but it is equally probable, from the same consideration, that his political conduct had no tincture of that dishonesty which was many years after laid to his charge. The 'Confessio Amantis' was, in the first instance, dedicated to Richard, and the removal of this dedication to make room for that to Henry the Fourth, provoked the vituperative eloquence of more than one critic in a subsequent age. It should, however, have been remembered, that Gower, to all appearance, was never a courtier, and that he was so far from being a renegade to his party, by seeking to honour the new monarch, that he only thereby continued to express opinions which he had advocated throughout his life. But the age and infirmities of the poet were of themselves sufficient to guard him from the supposed dishonesty. In the first year of Henry's reign, the loss of sight cut him off from the business of the world, and put, as he pathetically laments, an end to his career. Universally respected, possessed of great wealth, and satisfied with the fame he had acquired, it is scarcely to be credited, that he would now forfeit his reputation for honesty to acquire the smiles of a monarch, whose favour could do him no service, and with whom he had no errors to propitiate.

Gower was Chaucer's senior, but he survived him about two years. His death took place in 1402, and the sumptuous monument in which his remains are deposited attests both his taste and his munificence. The church of St Saviour's in Southwark, which contains this interesting record, was sometime before his decease destroyed by fire, and it was solely owing to his large contributions, and the exertions he made, that the venerable church which has excited the admiration of so many generations, rose from its ruins. The most curious feature in the monument under which he is buried, is the representation of his great work, in the form of three gilt volumes, lettered with the respective titles of the parts into which the poem was divided. Deeply imbued with piety, and attention to the rites of the faith which he professed, he founded a chantry at his tomb, and the time-hallowed aisle of St Mary Overee—as the church was formerly called—though the ceremonial which the poet instituted is forgotten, is still sacred to his memory.

The fame of Gower has been almost entirely lost sight of in modern times, through the brilliant reputation enjoyed by Chaucer. But it is judiciously observed by Warton, that "if the latter had not existed, the compositions of Gower alone would have been sufficient to rescue the reigns of Edward the Third and Richard the Second from the imputation of barbarism." In some of the minor poems which have survived him, a delicacy of thought and feeling is manifested, as superior to the ordinary style of sentiment prevalent in his age, as was his language

to that of most preceding versifiers. We shall here insert one specimen of his versification from the 'Florent':—

"My lord," she saide, "*grand-merci*"
 For of this word that ye now sayn,
 That ye have made me sovereign,
 My destiny is over passed;
 That never hereafter shall be *lassed*¹
 My beauty, which that I now have,
 Till I betake unto my grave.
 Both night and day, as I am now,
 I shall alway be such to you.
 The kinges daughter of Sicile
 I am; and *fell*² but sith a while,
 As I was with my father late,
 That my step-mother, for an hate
 Which toward me she hath begun,
*For-shope*³ me, till I hadde won
 The love and the sovereignty
 Of what knight that in his degree
 All other passeth of good name:
 And, as men sayn, ye be the same,
 The deed proveth it is so.
 Thus am I yours for evermo."

Tho was pleasance and joy enough;
 Each one with other play'd and *lough*,⁴
 They lived long, and well they far'd,
 And clerkes, that this chance heard,
 They written it in evidence,
 To teach, how that obedience
 May well fortune a man to love,
 And set him in his lust above.

By his habit of moralizing in the lighter productions of literature, Gower did a greater service to his countrymen than is commonly placed to his credit. The duty of teaching had been long confined to the clergy, and superstition and self-interest had, in a great measure, deprived that order of its ability to inculcate morality with a free and healthy spirit. Legends and anathemas are neither of them good supports of virtue, and it was in these that the bulk of the priesthood chiefly dealt. When men of sense and probity in the world began to set forth the worth of holiness and truth, unblended with the errors, and free from the fierceness of superstition or pride, a new tone was given to popular opinion; the maxims of piety and virtue had a freer circulation; and literature was allowed a place by the altar and the throne, because it was henceforth to perform an important part in the improvement of the human character. Gower was among the first to effect this valuable purpose, and his name, consequently, ought to be had in remembrance, not only for the confessedly great share he took in the formation of our language, but for the still greater benefit he conferred on the general cause of literature and morality.

¹ Many thanks.

² It befell.

³ Laughed.

⁴ Lessened.

⁵ Mis-shaped.

Chaucer.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1328.—DIED CIRC. A. D. 1400.

HITHERTO our poetry may be considered as only struggling to make its escape from the enchainning but gradually relaxing frosts of winter ; we are now to look upon it—to borrow the beautiful similitude of Mr Warton—as suddenly visited by an influence like to that of those “cloudless skies and that tepid atmosphere which sometimes gladden for a single day an English spring, and fill the hearts of men with the visionary prospect of a speedy summer.” Our poetic annals, in so far as they are really worth tracing for the gratification of poetic feeling, may be fairly said to commence with the name of Geoffrey Chaucer. The events of Chaucer’s life, in so far as they are really known to us, may be soon told, although most of his biographers have, by means of numberless disputes and conjectures, spun out the detail of them to very considerable length, and the latest writer who has undertaken the task, Mr Godwin, has actually contrived, without the aid of almost a single new fact, to extend the narrative over two quarto volumes. Nay, he tells us in his preface, that he was inclined to go on till he had written four quartos instead of two, had not his publisher assured him that the public would not sympathize with so swollen a structure blown out of such scanty materials. In truth, of the few incidents of the poet’s history which rest upon authentic testimony, nearly all are mere naked dates ; and of those which have been repeated by his successive biographers from more questionable sources, most are extremely doubtful, and some are quite improbable, or proved to be unfounded. Various accounts have been given even of the place of his birth ; but he himself, in one of his prose pieces, his ‘Testament of Love,’ seems expressly to intimate that he was a native of London. Of his family nothing whatever can be said to be known. Some suppose him to have been of noble descent ; while others, judging by the name—which, in old French, signifies a breeches-maker—conclude that he must have sprung from a plebeian stock. A common tradition is that his father was one Richard Chaucer, who kept a tavern, according to Stowe, in the Royal street, at the corner of Kirton-lane, and was buried in 1348 in his parish church of St Mary Aldermary, to which he left his house and its appurtenances. The old editors of his works, and most of the other writers who mention the circumstance, tell us that he was born in the year 1328. But the original authority upon which this date rests is not known ; and doubts have been sometimes entertained of its correctness. Mr Godwin, in consequence of the language of a recently discovered document, was at one time inclined to fix his birth so late as 1344 ; but on farther consideration, he reverted to the common opinion. He certainly received a learned education, and most probably studied at one of the universities, but whether at Oxford or Cambridge is doubtful. Most of his biographers make him to have attended both, as the easiest way of reconciling the accounts of different authorities. From the university they transfer him to the Middle, or, as some will have it, the Inner Temple ; but for the belief that he ever was a student of law, there is little or no foundation

Speght, indeed, in his edition of the poet's works, published in 1597, tells us that a Mr Buckley, many years before, had seen a record in the Temple, in which it was mentioned that Geoffrey Chaucer had been fined two shillings for beating a Franciscan friar in Fleet street. But, whatever we might be entitled to infer from this vague notice, its value as a proof that Chaucer was of the Temple is completely destroyed by the remark of Speght's very intelligent friend and correspondent, Francis Thynne, in his 'Animadversions,' published only a few years ago by Mr Todd, from the MS. in Lord Stafford's library, that this house was not frequented as a place for education in the law at all till towards the latter end of the reign of Edward III.; "at which time," says Thynne, "Chaucer was a grave man, holden in great credit, and employed in embassy; so that methinketh he should not be of that house; and yet, if he then were, I should judge it strange that he should violate the rules of peace and gravity in those years." Only sixteen years after the death of Edward III., Chaucer, as Thynne observes, is described by his friend Gower as an old man,—a fact, by the bye, which strongly confirms the earlier and common date assigned to his birth. Thynne, we may here notice, in these most acute and sensible animadversions, detects the blunder first committed by Speght, and in which he was followed by many other critics, among the rest by Warton and Ritson, of adducing a passage from Gower's 'Confessio Amantis,' beginning—

"Greet well Chaucer, when ye meet,
As my disciple and my poet;"

as a proof that Gower was not only Chaucer's senior, but had even been his master and instructor in his art. The words in question, in fact, are uttered not by Gower at all, but by Venus. It is the goddess of love who describes Chaucer as her poet and disciple. It is somewhat curious that although Warton, in one place,¹ quotes the commencing lines of this speech of Venus in the common and erroneous sense, he afterwards,² although by a citation of the wrong book, refers to it as the language of the goddess, and even gives the correct interpretation of the very lines he had before misapplied. This is not noticed by Warton's very learned and ingenious editor, who, however, corrects in a note the misstatement in the earlier page.

In the year 1367 an annuity of 20 marks was conferred upon Chaucer by Edward III., and, in the patent of this grant, which has been printed by Rymer, the poet is styled by the king *Valletus noster*, or, as Mr Tyrrelwhitt translates it, 'our yeoman,' a title given to young men before they were knighted. "How long he had served the king," says this writer, "in that or any other station, and what particular merits were rewarded by his royal bounty, are points equally unknown." Before this, indeed, Leland and his other early biographers tell us that he had travelled through France and the low countries; but for this statement there seems to be no proper authority. Soon after his return home, they say, he became page to the king; and his annuity, it is insinuated, was bestowed upon him as a reward for the delight which

¹ History of English Poetry, vol. ii. p. 177, edit. 1824.

² Ibid. p. 332.

he communicated to his royal master by the poetical effusions and sallies of wit in which his genius already distinguished itself. Whether in this or in some other way, he appears at any rate to have gradually risen in favour at court; for four years afterwards we find another annuity of the same amount conferred upon him, and the year following he received the honourable appointment of envoy, along with two other gentlemen, to the republic of Genoa, to manage some public negotiation, the nature of which, however, is not known. A visit to Italy, the land of beauty, romance, and song, could not fail to produce the happiest effect upon such a genius as that of Chaucer. It appears to have been in the course of this visit that he met with Petrarch at Padua, and learned from him, as he tells us himself, the pathetic story of Griselda, which he afterwards so beautifully versified, and which had just been translated into Latin by Petrarch—who died the following year—from Boccaccio's *Decameron*. On his return to England he received a new mark of the royal favour in the grant of a pitcher of wine daily for life, which was afterwards commuted for another annuity of twenty marks. The same year he obtained the lucrative place of comptroller of the customs of wool and hides for the port of London. If this appointment was given to Chaucer by the king in testimony of his majesty's admiration of his poetical abilities, it was a reward perhaps rather more substantial than appropriate; but the poet, we daresay, did not much object to it on that account, even although the appointment was accompanied with the proviso that "the said Geoffrey write with his own hand his rolls touching the said office, and continually reside there, and do and execute all things pertaining to the said office in his own proper person, and not by his substitute." Notwithstanding the labour and diligence thus demanded of him, the period during which he held this office seems to have been the happiest and most prosperous of Chaucer's life. He afterwards, in his *Testament of Love*, speaks of his condition at this time as having been that of one "glorious in worldly wellfulness, and having such goods in wealth as makes men rich." The dues and occasional perquisites of his office, together with his previous grants, must have produced him a considerable income; although it is probable that his biographers have greatly overrated its amount when they state him to have been in the receipt of about a thousand pounds sterling a-year. Nor does the attention he was obliged to give to business appear to have withdrawn him from the acquaintance of the Muses. In a very interesting passage of his *House of Fame*, he has put into the mouth of the eagle, who acts a principal part in the story, the following account of his own habits, which, from the mention of his reckonings, seems evidently to refer to this period of his life, during which, therefore, we may presume the poem to have been written:—

"——— thou hast no tidings,
Of Lovis folk if they be glade,
Ne of nothing else that God made,
And not only from far countree
That no tidings come in to thee;
Not of thy very neighbors
That dwellen almost at thy doers,
Thou hearest neither that ne this;
For whan thy labour all done is,

tion, by enlisting against him all the ancient and more powerful interests of the state, eventually undermined his power, and drove him from the helm of affairs. It is probable that upon this occasion Chaucer was deprived of his office of comptroller of the customs; although all that is really known, is, that from a state of affluence he suddenly fell into great difficulties and distress, so much so, that in order to satisfy his creditors, he was obliged to sell his annuities, and even, it is said, to have recourse to the king's protection in order to save himself from imprisonment. The utmost confusion and obscurity hangs over this portion of his history; but, about the year 1383, he appears, either on account of his debts, or, as other authorities assert, in consequence of his having exposed himself to danger by engaging in the unsuccessful insurrection of the followers of John of Northampton, the reforming mayor of London, to have fled from the country, and taken refuge first in France, and afterwards in Zealand. After some time, however, he returned to England; and, if we may trust the common account, made his peace with the crown by making a full disclosure of the guilt of his associates,—an act which naturally and justly exposed him for a long period afterwards to much odium. But it would be unfair to form any decisive opinion as to Chaucer's actual conduct from the vague accounts that have come down to us of this unexplained transaction. For one thing, it does not appear that any person suffered in consequence of his information. As for himself, he is said to have retired to a small house at Woodstock, resolved to spend the remainder of his days at a distance from civil broils. When, some time after this, the credit of the duke of Lancaster revived, after his return from Spain with great wealth, and his success in marrying his two daughters to the kings of Castile and Portugal, Chaucer seems again to have partaken in some degree of the sunshine of royal favour,—one of his pensions at least being restored to him, and a pipe of wine being also granted to him annually out of the customs of London. But it does not appear that he was ever again induced to quit his country retreat for the court. On the accession of Henry IV. the son of his old patron John of Gaunt, in 1399, he received a renewal of his former patents, and also a grant of an additional annuity of forty marks for life. But he did not long survive the receipt of these favours; for, having been obliged, we are told, to come up to town to arrange some of his affairs which the late convulsion in the state had thrown into disorder, the fatigue which he underwent proved too great for his strength, and, falling ill, he died on the 25th of October, 1400, in the seventy-second year of his age. He was buried, as Caxton, the printer tells us in his edition of the poet's prose translation of Boethius, "in the abbey of Westminster, before the chapel of St Bennet; by whose sepulchre is written on a table hanging on a pillar his epitaph made by a poet laureate." Chaucer is generally supposed to have been interred in the same spot in which Dryden's body was afterwards laid. Of any family which he left, nothing is known with certainty. One of his prose works, his 'Treatise on the Astrolabe,' bears to have been written for the instruction of his son Lewis, who was then—about the year 1391—ten years of age. But the biographers give him, besides Lewis, another and older son Thomas, who rose to be speaker of the house of commons, and to occupy various other high offices in the reigns of Henry IV., V., and VI. This Tho-

mas Chaucer, by a daughter, became progenitor of the earls of Lincoln and of the De la Poles, dukes of Suffolk, the last of whom, Edward de la Pole, was beheaded for treason in the reign of Henry VII.; but it is very doubtful, after all, if he was really the son of Chaucer the poet. Various portraits of the face and person of Chaucer, we may add, have come down to us, some of which seem to be nearly of his own time. All represent him as of a noble and dignified presence; and, indeed, he has, in tradition, the reputation of having been one of the handsomest personages of his age. Granger has printed the following lines which delineate him graphically enough:—

“ His stature was not very tall,
Lean he was, his legs were small,
Hosed within a stock of red,
A buttoned bonnet on his head.”

This description agrees very well with an old painting of him, of which Mr Godwin has given an engraving in his second volume.

The works of Chaucer are very voluminous; consisting, besides several prose treatises, of his famous Canterbury tales, a poem extending to above 17,000 lines, without including the portion of which the genuineness is doubted, or the Parson's tale, which is in prose; the Romaunt of the Rose, a translation from the French of William de Lorris, of which there are nearly 8,000 lines; the poem of Troilus and Cressida, in five books; the House of Fame, in three books; and many minor pieces. Nearly all these productions are rich in beauty; and of those which are less known, the Romaunt of the Rose, the Troilus and Cressida, the Flower and Leaf, and the House of Fame, may be especially recommended to the attention of the lovers of genuine poetic inspiration, as evidencing all of them an affluence of imaginative genius, equal perhaps to any thing that is to be found even in the Canterbury tales themselves. It is in these tales, however, the work of his declining age, composed in the tranquillity of his sylvan retirement, and after his intercourse with the world's multitudes had become little more than a remembered dream, that he has alone given full manifestation of the whole strength and variety of his powers, and done justice to the liberality of nature. This poem is perhaps (with the exception of Lord Byron's Don Juan) the most wonderful example in literature of that composite style of writing, which, demanding in the author an almost universal susceptibility and skill of execution, overpowers us with a florid variety and magnificence of effect, akin to that produced by the mingled beauties and sublimities of external nature, or by the grander parts of the actual drama of human life itself. Chaucer is one of that short list of men of the highest genius who have been also men thoroughly conversant with the real world. It was to this intercourse with society as well as with books and with his own mind, that he no doubt owed in great part that extraordinary combination of almost opposite powers and qualifications which has given to his poetry such manifold and diversified charms. There is in truth hardly one constituent of the poetical character with which the writings he has left behind him do not prove him to have been splendidly endowed. If you deem the essence of genuine poetry to consist in that sublimity and soaring grandeur of conception which delights in escaping from the

real world altogether, and luxuriating only among the brighter hues and more varied forms of fiction, call up, with Milton, "him who left half-told the story of Cambuscan bold," or go to the magnificent and finished delineations of the Knight's tale, to the picture of Lycurgus, "the great king of Thrace, who like a Griffin looked about," or to the desolate horrors of the forest where "stood the temple of Mars armipotent," and the statue of the god of war himself, with

"The wolf that stood before him at his feet,
With eyes blood-red, and of a man did eat."

Or, if you would linger over the scenery of a fairy land of gentler aspect and softer fascination, when from among many other examples of the same florid warmth of conception and honied eloquence, which might be quoted from the other productions of this author, we name only the allegory of the Flower and the Leaf, can we refer to any other delineation that poetic inspiration ever prompted, more richly gilded with all the sweetest hues and radiances of poetry? Still, however, it is in giving forceful utterance to the passions and affections of the human heart that this great poet is ever greatest. In simple, but yet most soul-subduing pathos, what writer of any age shall take precedence of him to whom we owe—passing over many other almost equally touching delineations—the two tales of Constance and Griselda, the last of which in particular is a creation of almost stainless and perfect beauty? But it is his admirable tact in describing and exposing the ridiculous in human character, that constitutes perhaps the attribute of Chaucer's genius in which he stands most alone. In humour, indeed, in satire, in rich and sometimes almost riotous jollity, in short, in comic power, by whatever name it may be called, it is hardly too much to affirm that he never has been equalled. We cannot here enumerate the many passages throughout his writings that might be quoted in illustration of this part of his poetic character; but we would refer generally to the prologues interspersed among the Canterbury tales as almost all of them inimitably admirable as examples of what we would describe—as well as to the tales of the Miller, the Reeve, the Wife of Bath, the Friar, the Sompnour, the Merchant, the Shipman, as particularly distinguished by the same species of excellence.

Several of Chaucer's compositions have been imitated or paraphrased in modern times. Indeed we believe a modernized version of the whole, or at least of the greater part of the Canterbury tales, was published in the beginning of the last century; but it probably was not very skilfully done. Dryden's admirable imitations of the Flower and Leaf, and of various parts of the Canterbury tales, published in his Fables, are familiar to all readers of English poetry—as are also those of the Wife of Bath's prologue, and of the Merchant's tale of January and May, so spiritedly executed by Pope. The Temple of Fame of the latter writer is also, as is well known, founded upon Chaucer's House of Fame; but the scheme and conduct of the one poem are in many respects quite distinct from those of the other. The finest part of Pope's poem, the description of the six columns on which the great "heirs of fame" are elevated, is entirely his own, in conception as in execution. Wordsworth has given us a version of the Prioress's tale, constructed on the principle of the least departure from the original

language that is necessary to render it intelligible to modern ears. It is executed with the taste and delicacy that might be expected from the author; but the tale in question is not calculated to diffuse a fair impression of the glories of 'the morning-star of English poetry,' as Wordsworth himself has finely designated Chaucer. If we remember aright, a translation of the whole of the *Canterbury tales* upon this principle was suggested and recommended some years ago in a paper in the *Retrospective Review*, and some very happy specimens given of the manner in which the task might be accomplished. Finally, in mentioning the several modern imitations of Chaucer, we ought not to forget a very noble one of the Squire's tale, (the famous unfinished story of *Cambuscan*) which appeared in the second volume of the *Liberal*, and the author of which, we think, intimated his intention, if his health should permit, of endeavouring to carry on and conclude the poem. We are not aware that he has fulfilled his promise; but there are few things we should like better to see than the completion of that attempt.

We cannot here enter into the controversy with regard to the versification of Chaucer. Mr Tyrrwhitt, in his admirable edition of the *Canterbury tales*, (the only part of Chaucer's works by the by that has yet been well edited,) unfolded with great ability and force of argument the doctrine, that the verse in which these poems are written, however irregular it may seem, is in truth as correctly rythmical as that now in use. The reason why it appears to be otherwise being, that we have now ceased to pronounce the final *e* in many words in which it was audible and constituted a distinct syllable in Chaucer's time. Up, we believe, to the appearance of the recent edition of the poems of Surrey and Wyatt by the late Dr Scott, Mr Tyrrwhitt's theory upon this subject was held to be the true one; but many critics and philologists have since been of opinion that it has been overturned by the examination of it given in that work. Mr Southey, we observe, in his selections from our ancient poets just published, speaks in one place of the universal opinion being now against the regular character of Chaucer's verse; but he afterwards acknowledges that he found he had spoken upon this head somewhat too hastily. For our own parts we will merely say, that we regard Dr Scott's arguments as quite inconclusive.⁶ The editor of the last edition of Warton's *History of English Poetry*, long ago promised an examination of Mr Tyrrwhitt's Essay, in a supplementary volume to that publication, but the book, we believe, never has appeared, although the writer to whom we refer is perhaps better qualified than any one else to elucidate this interesting subject. His opinion, we gather from some hints he gives in his notes to Warton, is adverse to Tyrrwhitt's views.

Perhaps the truest as well as the most discernible index of a writer's popularity, is in general the number of his imitators in his own or the immediately succeeding generation. The most noticeable, at least, among the immediate effects which are wrought upon a nation's literature by the ascendancy of one man's genius, is in most cases the

⁶ There are some observations on this subject by the late Mr James Boswell in the first volume of the last edition of *Shakspeare*, in 21 vols. by him and Mr Malone, published in 1821, but they are not very profound. Indeed, the writer's views as to English versification in general, are in many respects quite erroneous.

rushing up throughout its whole soil of something that has evidently taken both its form and its colour from the spirit of his productions, and which at the same time has seldom any other quality beyond these external resemblances to render it valuable or attractive. As heaven's thunder disdains not to be reverberated by the echoes of earth, so the voice of inspiration awakens, wherever it rings, its multiplying mockeries too, and is responded to from a thousand mimic throats whom it alone has made vocal. No name ever had a more plenteous tribute paid to it of this species of adulation than that of Chaucer. Even from the records of the first century after his death, all unvisited as it was by any gleam of genuine poetic inspiration, one of our antiquaries has reckoned up the names of no fewer than seventy such moilers, the carolings of all of whom are little better than an elaborate and lifeless mimicry of the strains of their mighty progenitor. Many of them, too, seem to have toiled at their occupation with a stout-hearted and untiring perseverance, which the service of Apollo has not always awakened even in the most favoured of its votaries. One of these unwearied moilers alone—Lydgate, the once celebrated monk of Bury—has left us above 250 different productions on all sorts of subjects; and seems, indeed, from the hints we have of his history, to have kept a sort of office for the manufacture and sale of poetry, and to have supplied his numerous customers as regularly and expeditiously as if he had been in the habit of throwing off the article by a steam-engine. This inexhaustible affluence of rhymes seems to have excited towards Lydgate in a very singular degree the admiration of his simple contemporaries: his popularity among whom, indeed, contrasted with the neglect and contempt wherewith he has been treated by their descendants, affords one of the most striking examples on record of the strange caprices of national taste, and the shadowy instability of human fame.

John Lydgate.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1375.—DIED CIRC. A. D. 1461.

THE language of a country can only be improved by very slow degrees, and the writers consequently who lived at an early period of its formation, are rather to be estimated by their learning and general excellence of thought, than by their modes of expression. It ought not, therefore, to occasion much surprise, that most of the few authors who flourished in the age immediately succeeding that of Chaucer, exhibit little improvement in point of style, and seem rather to be hovering on the verge of the barbarism which that great poet had, by a sudden flight, left far behind, than ready to advance beyond the line which he had thus traced out. "I consider Chaucer," says Warton, "as a genial day in an English spring. A brilliant sun enlivens the face of nature with an unusual lustre: the sudden appearance of cloudless skies, and the unexpected warmth of a tepid atmosphere, after the gloom and the inclemencies of a tedious winter, fill our hearts with the visionary prospect of a speedy summer, and we fondly anticipate a long continuance of gentle gales and vernal serenity. But winter returns with redoubled horrors: the clouds condense more formidably

than before : and those tender buds, and early blossoms, which were called forth by the transient gleam of a temporary sun-shine, are nipped by frosts and torn by tempests." Nothing, however, appears to have taken place but what is common to almost every age of literature, and it would be wrong, perhaps, to understand the elegant comparison of the historian in any but the most restricted sense. It is not the appearance of only a few plants, or of plants wanting in luxuriance, that indicates with certainty the untimely blights of winter. The soil itself may be unfavourable to their growth, and the one or two which have flourished may have owed their increase to particular circumstances, and ought not, therefore, to be regarded as proper indicators of the season or the climate. Chaucer and Gower both enjoyed considerable advantages, and were men possessing much more than the average of talent. We are, therefore, in nowise to consider that literature went back because they were not generally succeeded by writers of greater or equal talent, than we are to consider that winter is returned because the fields are not covered with verdure as rich as the beds of some favoured garden. The most advanced periods of literature exhibit circumstances precisely the same as those to be observed in that of which we are speaking. Milton and Pope are the cynosures of their respective eras ; but it would be committing an important error to judge of the general state of literature in those periods from the productions of these poets. Neither of them indicated the common average of talent or learning then prevalent, and when they died there was no more a retrograde motion in literature, than there was in science at the death of Newton. Though, therefore, with the exception of Lydgate himself, the poets of his age were of very inferior merit to Chaucer, notwithstanding the advantage they enjoyed of living thirty or forty years later, we are not from this to infer that the progress of improvement was at a stand. Considering, indeed, the reputation Lydgate obtained, the value that was set upon his productions, and, above all, the well-known fact, that he opened a school for teaching the art of versification and composition to the sons of the nobility,—considering these circumstances, there is reason to believe that literature was making a sure though slow advance throughout the nation.

The date of Lydgate's birth is not known, but he is said to have enjoyed considerable distinction as a poet, about the year 1430. He was educated at Oxford, but appears to have remained at that university but a short time. On quitting it, he made the tour of France and Italy, and in both these countries studied with ardour and profit. In the one, poetry still retained much of the beauty and raciness which had characterised the Provençal minstrelsy ; in the other, Boccaccio had lately ingrafted on the harmonious language of Dante and Petrarch, all the gaiety and varied attractions of romance. To a man of taste like Lydgate, the materials of poetry thus laid before him could hardly fail of appearing of double value when viewed amid the very scenes of their creation. We accordingly find that, when he returned to England, he strenuously devoted himself to the cultivation of the poetic art, drawing the subjects of almost all his pieces from the writings of Boccaccio and French authors, and, in some instances, only translating them. While thus engaged, he was enjoying the retirement and advantages of the rich Benedictine abbey at Bury St Edmund's, of which

he was a monk. His celebrity was probably not a little aided by the circumstance of his being an ecclesiastic, and, as we have already mentioned, the name he acquired by his productions enabled him to open a school in the monastery for the introduction of the young nobility to the knowledge of polite literature. Few circumstances recorded of the present period are better adapted than this to give us a favourable impression of the state of the public mind. Hitherto the acquirements which fitted a man to shine in the battle-field, or the tournament, were the exclusive pursuit of the higher classes, and they were thought sufficiently well-prepared to adorn their station when they could bear themselves gallantly against an enemy or a rival. We now learn that it was beginning to be thought necessary to exhibit some power of mind, and to imitate the example already set by the nobility of France and Italy in the cultivation of literature. Instead, therefore, of considering as formerly, that it was on the professional minstrel, or the learned clerk only, that the skill in poetry, or science, could confer honour, the young courtiers began to envy the praise they obtained, and gradually acquiring a taste for the lighter accomplishments of the mind, soon became sensible of the universal excellence and dignity of knowledge. Lydgate himself was a very general scholar, and is said to have been acquainted, as far as the learning of his times would allow him, with geometry and astronomy, as well as theology, and the usual science of the schoolmen. According, however, to his own account he was little acquainted with any other language but French; and, if this be true, we have a curious proof in his works of the immense mass of poetical erudition which was imported into this country through the medium of that language, or at least through that in combination with Italian. The illustrations with which Lydgate and others of our very early poets adorned their pages, might be profitably examined with respect to the doubts which furnished matter for the long controversy on the subject of Shakspeare's learning. Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, have allusions in their poems to almost every fable and important event, in Greek and Roman history, and even the abstrusest doctrines of Plato and Aristotle find a place in their stories, and are dilated upon with minute ingenuity. The curious mixtures of truth and falsehood, and the equally strange perversions of philosophy which frequently startle the sober reader of such productions, only serve to exhibit in a stronger light the disjointed masses of learning thus brought together, and the inquirer into the literature of this period cannot help being continually tempted to speculate on the state of mind which must have necessarily resulted from so remarkable a confusion of wild tradition with the profoundest discoveries of the human intellect in its most healthy condition.

The catalogue which has been made of Lydgate's writings by the laborious Ritson, would lead us to regard him as one of the most fruitful authors of that or any other age. According to this list, he produced no fewer than two hundred and fifty separate pieces, and even supposing that a large portion of these have been falsely ascribed to him, he would still appear as a writer of indefatigable industry. His chief and best known productions are the 'Fall of Princes,' the 'Siege of Thebes,' and the 'Destruction of Troy.' Among the most popular of his minor pieces was the 'Dance of Death,' a translation made from

the French, at the instance of the chapter of St Paul's, who employed it to illustrate the representations with which their cloister was decorated. This was not the only production of his pen undertaken at the special request of his learned brethren. The abbot of St Albans engaged him to translate the life of his patron-saint into English verse, and paid him one hundred shillings for the manuscript and illuminations with which it was ornamented. He was, it appears, always at the call of those whom he esteemed, or from whom he expected a reward, and hence probably the variety and number of his poems, the light occasions on which some of them seem to have been written, and in part, perhaps, the little merit which some of them possess.

With all the faults of diffuseness and want of vigour of which Lydgate has been accused, he exhibits the most decided marks of improved clearness, both in style and versification. In the elegant little poem, entitled the 'Lyfe of our Lady,' passages occur which breathe an Italian sweetness, and indicate the profit our author had received from having his ear tutored with the mellifluous flow of southern speech. The opening stanzas of this piece have been universally admired for their beauty, both of expression and imagery. Addressing the reader, he says,—

" O thoughtfull hertè plunged in distresse
With slombre of sleuth, this long wynter's night !
Out of the slepe of mortal hevynesse
Awake anon, and loke upon the light
Of thilkè sterre, that with her bemys bright,
And with the shynynge of her stremes meryè,
Is wont to glad all our hemisperie.

This sterre in beaultie passith Pleiades,
Bothe of shynynge, and eke of stremes clere,
Bootes, and Arctur, and also Iades,
And Esperus, whan that it doth appere :
For this is Spica, with her brightè spere,
That towarde evyn, at midnyght, and at morowe,
Downe from hevyn adawith al our sorowe.—

And dryeth up the bytter terys wete
Of Aurora, after the morowe graye,
That she in wepyng dothe on flowres flete,
In lusty Aprill, and in fresshè Maye :
And causeth Phebus, the bryght somers daye,
With his wayve gold-yborned, bryght and fayre,
To enchase the mystès of our cloudy ayre.

Now fayrè sterre, O sterre of sterrys all !
Whose lyght to se the angels do delyte,
So let the gold-dewe of thy grace yfall
Into my breste, lyke scalys fayre and whyte,
Me to enspire !"

Numerous passages occur of equal elegance, in other parts of his works. The description given of Fortune in the 'Fall of Princes,' would bear comparison with the most admired personifications in the classical writers. Of her dress he says :—

" Her habyte was of manyfolde colours,
Watchet blewè of fayned stedfastnesse ;
Her gold allayed like sun in watry showres,
Meyxt with grene, for change and doublenesse.

The introduction of Fortune is followed by that of Caius Marius, which gives occasion for another delineation of equal power:—

“ Blacke was his wode, and his habyte also,
His heed unkempt, his lockis hore and gray,
His loke doune-cast in token of sorowe and wo.
On his chekès the saltè teares lay,
Which bare recorde of his deadly affray.
His robè stayned was with Romaine blode,
His sworde aye redy whet to do vengeance;
Lyke a tyraunt most furyouse and wode,
In slaughter and murdre set at his plesaunce.”

Of his skill in description, the following will give a favourable idea. He is speaking of Polymite wandering through a wilderness:—

“ Holding his way, of hertè nothing light,
Wate and weary, till it draweth to night:
And al the day beholding ewirmon,
He neither sawe ne castle, towre, ne town;
The which thing greveth him full sore.
And sodenly the see began to rore,
Winde and tempèst hidiously to arise,
The rain doun beten in ful grisly wise;
That many a beast thereof was adrad,
And nigh for fere gan to waxe mad,
As it seemed by the full wofull sownes,
Of tigers, beres, of bores, and of lionnes;
Which to refute, and himself for to save,
Evrich in haste draweth to his cave.”

It is, however, in descriptions of morning, or of soft and bowery shades, that the genius of Lydgate chiefly delighted to expatiate, and in these, its favourite subjects, it may challenge equality with Chaucer, or any other poet in the language. Take, for example, the following:—

“ Tyll at the last, among the bowès glade,
Of adventure, I caught a plesaunt shade;
Ful smothe, and playn, and lusty for to sene,
And soft as velvette was the yonge grene:
Where from my hors I did alight as fast,
And on a bowe aloft his reynè cast.
So faynte and wate of werynesse I was,
That I me layd adoune upon the gras,
Upon a brinkè, shortly for to telle,
Besyde the river of a cristall wellè;
And the watèr, as I reherse can,
Like quickè-silver in his streames yran,
Of which the gravell and the brightè stone,
As any golde, agaynst the sun yshone.”

The morning is thus described:—

“ When that the rowes and the rayes redde
Eastward to us full early ginnen spredde,
Even at the twylyght in the dawninge,
Whan that the larke of custom ginneth synge,
For to saluè in her heavenly laye,
The lusty goddesse of the morowe graye,
I meane Aurora, which afore the sunne
Is wont t' enchase the blacke skyès dunne,
And al the darknesse of the dimmy night:
And freshe Phebus, with comforte of his light,

And with the brightnes of his bemes shene,
 Hath overgylt the hugé hylles grene;
 And flowrés eke, agayn the morowe-tide,
 Upon their stalkes gan playn their leavés wide."

It is from such passages as these that the opinions which Winstanley and others have expressed on the comparative merits of Lydgate, seem worthy of attention. According to their notion, "He was the best poet of his age, for if Chaucer's coin were of greater weight for deeper learning, Lydgate's was of a more refined standard for purer language." Of the value which was set upon his writings in his own age, some idea may be formed from the expense bestowed in binding and illustrating them, and from their being regarded as a fit present to the most exalted personages. Thus the abbot of St Albans spent no less than three pounds—a large sum for that period—on the binding of the poem which Lydgate wrote at his desire; and the manuscript of that which he composed in commemoration of St Edmund, and which was presented to Henry the Sixth on his visit to Bury, is one of the most splendidly ornamented in existence. Not only are the initial letters executed in colours of the greatest brilliancy, but the poetry itself is illustrated with no less than a hundred and twenty designs, exquisitely painted, and among which are portraits of Lydgate himself, of the abbot of St Edmund's monastery, and two of the king, in one of which he is seen on his throne with the abbot kneeling before him, and presenting the manuscript. In the other he is represented under the figure of a child praying prostrate on a carpet before the shrine of the patron saint.

From these circumstances, and from the intrinsic merit of his poems, there can be little doubt but that Lydgate deserves a conspicuous place among the fathers of English poetry. He is, by turns, forcible and tender; and though his genius was far less inventive than that of Chaucer, and his productions, in consequence, are greatly inferior in all those points which regard delineation of character, or narration, he was not unworthy to succeed him in the simpler walks of the muse. In them he followed his great master with a faithful, though a mild and gentle spirit, nor ought it ever to be forgotten that he was the first of our poets to infuse into the language the sweetness and amenity of Italian.

Richard of Chichester.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1360.

THE earliest date which occurs in the scanty memorials of this writer's life, is that of 1350, when he joined the fraternity of the Benedictine monastery of Saint Peter's, Westminster. Nothing is known of his parentage, or of the place of his education, but it is inferred from the erudition he displayed in subsequent years, that he must have enjoyed the advantages which were at that time only open to the more respectable classes of the community. The greater part of his life appears to have been spent in the monastery, to which he attached himself at the time above mentioned, his name occurring in the abbey rolls, as late as the year 1399, that is nearly fifty years after his uniting himself to

the society. During this long period, however, the monotony of conventual seclusion was broken by his active application to the study of the old British and Anglo-Saxon antiquities. In this pursuit, he made such important advances, that he received the honourable appellation of the Historiographer, and one of his biographers asserts, that he was allowed to make a tour for the purpose of inspecting the principal libraries of the kingdom. We can scarcely imagine any undertaking more likely to prove useful to the age in which he lived than this. Many valuable manuscripts must have by that time become unintelligible, and almost forgotten, in the several depositories where they had been hoarded up. But the fact rests on the single testimony of Pits, who has given no clue for the discovery of the source whence he derived his information. Some probability is added to his statement from the known fact of Richard of Chichester's extensive acquaintance with matters of ancient British history, and it would scarcely seem likely that an author devoted to such a branch of learning, could remain contented without examining the stores of information to be found in various parts of the kingdom. It is also reasonable to suppose, that a writer whose chief object it was to elucidate the antiquities of his own country, would not fail to employ the advantages he possessed for travelling to explore its treasures, before turning his attention to those of foreign countries. The well-accredited fact, that in the latter part of his life, he visited Italy, and spent some time at Rome, thus tends to confirm the tradition of his having collected the materials of his works, from an actual examination of the great libraries belonging to the ecclesiastical establishments of England. The period fixed for his Italian journey is that which occurred between the years 1391 and 1397. He is said to have lived but four or five years after his return, and to have been interred in the abbey cloisters.

From the catalogue of his works, Richard of Chichester appears to have been a man of general ability and learning, and there is reason for considering him one of the most useful scholars of his age. Besides his principal treatise, that '*De Situ Britanniae*,' he wrote a tract on the Greater and Lesser Creed, and another on Ecclesiastical Offices, and a History of England from the time of Hengist to the year 1348. Of this work, however, Dr Whittaker gives but a poor character. "The hope," says he, "of meeting with discoveries as great in the Roman, British, and Saxon history, as he has given us concerning the preceding period, induced me to examine the work. But my expectations were greatly disappointed. The learned scholar and the deep antiquarian, I found sunk into an ignorant novice, sometimes the copier of Huntingdon, but generally the transcriber of Geoffrey. Deprived of his Roman guides, Richard showed himself as ignorant and as injudicious as any of his illiterate contemporaries about him in Italy."

Notwithstanding the license he obtained to travel, and the tour which he is supposed to have taken in search of British antiquities, the superiors of his monastery appear at one time to have regarded the pursuits in which he was engaged with no favourable eye. In one part of his work *De Situ Britanniae*, he represents himself as arguing with some one in defence of his studies; "Of what service," asked his opponent, "are these things but to delude the world with unmeaning trifles?" To which he replies, "Do not such narratives exhibit proofs of divine

providence? Does it not hence appear, that an evangelical sermon concerning the death and merits of Christ enlightened and subdued a world overrun with Gentile superstitions? In the remark that such things are properly treated of in systems of chronology, I rejoin: nor is it too much to know that our ancestors were not, as some assert, *autoctones*, sprung from the earth; but that God opened the book of nature to display his omnipotence, such as it is described in the book of Moses." But from what follows, he seems to have felt dissatisfied with his own reasoning, for he says, "When the abbot answered, that works which were intended merely to acquire reputation for their authors from posterity, should be committed to the flames, I confess with gratitude that I repented of this undertaking. The remainder of the work is therefore only a chronological abridgment, which I present to the reader, whom I commend to the goodness and protection of God; and at the same time request that he will pray for me to our Holy Father, who is merciful and inclined to forgiveness." This passage is curious and valuable as enabling us to judge in some degree of the personal character of the author. He was evidently a man of enlightened mind, or he would not have thought of leaving the circle of monastic study; but it is equally clear that he was conscientiously alive to the duties of his profession, or he would never have so readily yielded to the suggestions of his opponents.

John Harding.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1378.—DIED A. D. 1461.

THE date of this writer's birth is uncertain; but the best authenticated accounts fix it about the year 1378. He is also supposed on the same authority to have been a native of one of the northern counties, and to have sprung from a family of distinction in that part of the kingdom. As was the custom of the age, his parents placed him, in his twelfth year, in the household of Percy, earl of Northumberland, in whose service he continued till he was twenty-five. By this time he was accomplished in all the acquirements requisite to the rank he held in life, and in the famous battle of Shrewsbury, which took place in 1403, he distinguished himself so well, as ever after to enjoy the reputation of being an excellent soldier. Some confusion of dates has puzzled his biographers in this part of his memoirs, and he has been said to have won his first laurels in the defence of Roxburgh castle against the Scots. This statement, however, has been proved incorrect, and the battle of Shrewsbury was, without doubt, the occasion of his earliest display of military talent.

Courage, patriotism, and sagacity, were exhibited in the next adventure, of which mention is made in the few notices that remain of his life. It had been long the desire of the English monarchs to prove that the kings of Scotland were legally bound to do them homage for their crowns. But this could not be effected without documents, and no political ingenuity had as yet been able to discover the means by which such vouchers were to be procured. But Harding at length undertook to make his way into Scotland for the express purpose of ob-

taining possession of such of the national instruments as might be sufficient to solve the point in dispute in the manner the English desired. The common opinion is that he succeeded in his hazardous attempt, and that he really presented the valuable documents in question to his monarch. Ritson, however, boldly declares that "he was a most dexterous forger," and that he "obtained great rewards from Henry the Sixth and Edward the Fourth, for a number of supposititious charters of fealty and homage from the Scottish monarchs to the kings of England, which he pretended to have obtained in Scotland at the hazard of his life." But the milder supposition, and that which best accords with the general accounts of his life and character is, that he was himself deceived as to the genuineness of the papers he presented; that he obtained them at the risk of his personal safety, as is related, but that they were forgeries palmed upon him by some cunning deceiver.

In whatever way Harding became possessed of these documents, they acquired him the constant favour of his king, and led him, in the end, to compose the work for which alone he is named in literary history: 'The Chronicle of England into the reign of King Edward the Fourth, in verse.' But this production exhibits none of those graces which Chaucer and his contemporaries had introduced into the national poetry. The former of these writers died when Harding had just reached manhood; and his works must have been familiar to him when he became an author. Little credit, therefore, can be allowed him for poetic talent; but his chronicle is not without its value, and the antiquary turns to it with pleasure, as a curious, though bold and unadorned narrative of actual events. He died about the year 1461.

Lady Juliana Berners.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1388.

THE reign of Edward IV. was graced by one female authoress, the Lady Juliana, sister to Richard Lord Berners, and prioress of the nunnery of Sopewell. Mr Ballard supposes that this lady was born at Roding in Essex, about the beginning of the 15th century. If, however, the general opinion be correct, that she was the daughter of Sir James Berners of Berners-Roding, her birth must have been earlier by some years than Mr Ballard supposes: for Sir James was beheaded in 1388. From the few biographical notices which we possess of the Lady Juliana, we are led to conclude that she was not less distinguished for beauty and elegance of person, than for mental accomplishments. Holinshed speaks of her as "a gentlewoman indued with excellent giftes of body and mind," and informs us that she was very fond of some masculine amusements, especially the sports of the field. Her skill in hunting and hawking was so great, that she composed treatises upon these sports in verse, which were so highly esteemed that they were published while the art of printing was yet in its infancy in England, in the famous 'Boke of St Alban's,' the first edition of which is supposed to have been printed at the monastery of St Alban's in 1481. An edition of this 'boke,' published at London in 1595, bears the following title,—"The gentleman's academie, or the Book of St Al-

ban's; containing three most exact and excellent books, the first of hawking, the second of all the proper terms of hunting, and the last of armory; all compiled by Juliana Barnes, in the year from the incarnation of Christ, 1486; and now reduced into better method by S. M." It is pretty clear that the editor of this edition ascribes a false date to Lady Juliana's performances. Sir James Berners' daughter, if alive at this period, must have been nearly one hundred years old,—no very likely age certainly to find amusement in discoursing on field sports. The colophon of the St Alban's edition runs thus:—"And here now endeth the boke of chasyng of armys, translatyt and compylt togedyr at Saint Albons, the yere from thyncarnacyon of our Lorde Jhesu Crist, mccccclxxxvi;" but, it has been justly observed, all that we are entitled to infer from this is, that that part of the work which relates to heraldry was not written by Lady Juliana, although generally ascribed to her. Mr Haslewood, the editor of an excellent fac-simile reprint of the Boke of St Albans, as printed by Wynkyn de Worde, is of opinion that the only portions of the volume which can with certainty be attributed to Lady Juliana, are, 1st, a small portion of the treatise on hawking; 2d, the treatise upon hunting; 3d, a short list of the beasts of chase; and, 4th, another list of beasts and fowls. The following sort of lyrical epilogue to the book of hunting is not entirely devoid of merit:—

"A faithful friend would I fain find,
To find him there he might be found;
But now is the world wext so unkind,
That friendship is fall to the ground.
Now a friend I have found,
That I will neither *ban'* ne curse;
But, of all friends in field or town,
Ever gramercy mine own purse.

My purse it is my privy wife:
(This song I dare both sing and say:)
It parteth men of muche strife,
When every man for himself shall pay.
As I ride in rich array
For gold and silver men will me *flourish*;¹
By this matter I dare well say
Ever gramercy mine own purse.

As I ride with gold so *rede*,
And have to do with landys law,
Men for my money will make me speed,
And for my goods they will me *knaue*
More and less to me will draw,
Both the better and the worse:
By this matter I say *in sawe*²
Ever gramercy mine own purse.

It fell by me upon a time,
As it hath *doo* by many one *mo*,
My horse, my neat, my sheep, my swine,
And all my goods they fell me fro;
I went to my friends and told them so;
And home again they bade me truss:

¹ Execrate.

² Probably *flatter*; but the rhyme is indefensible.

³ Proverbially.

I said again, when I was wo,
Ever gramercy mine own purse.

Therefore I rede you, sires all,
To assay your friends *or* ye have need :
For, *and* ye come down and have a fall,
Full few of them for you will *grede*.⁴
Therefore, assay them every one,
Both the better and the worse.—
Our Lord, that shope both sun and moon,
Send us spending in our purse !”

“ From an abbess disposed to turn author,” says Warton, “ we might more reasonably have expected a manual of meditations for the closet, or select rules for making salves, or distilling strong waters. But the diversions of the field were not thought inconsistent with the character of a religious lady of this eminent rank, who resembled an abbot in respect of exercising manorial jurisdiction, and who hawked and hunted in common with other ladies of distinction.” Yet the claims of the fair authoress to original composition are disputed both by Warton and Dalloway, who are of opinion, that notwithstanding Lady Juliana’s practical acquaintance with her subject, she contented herself with selecting a French treatise as her favourite pastimes for translation. We are unable to determine the point, which indeed Warton himself does not undertake to demonstrate.

William Caxton.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1412.—DIED A. D. 1492.

FEW names occur in English history more fitted to excite a feeling of gratitude than that of Caxton. Literature, when he appeared in the world, had just broken from its cradle, and required, in proportion to its increasing strength, new and rapid increase of circulation. The multiplication of books by the labour of transcribers was a progress as slow as it was expensive, and could only afford a sufficient supply of copies when the number of readers was extremely small. It is true that as the demand for manuscripts increased, the class of persons engaged for transcribing them would also enlarge itself: but this could not lessen the expense of copying,—each transcriber would have to be maintained by his labour, and every purchaser of a manuscript in the ordinary course of such transactions would, therefore, have to pay a price equivalent to his support, while copying the work in demand. The monks had produced large numbers of manuscripts, and the curious and diligent scholar might avail himself sometimes of the stores thus heaped up; but the labours of the convent were not likely to be employed in aid of any new species of literature,—abbots would not set their fraternity to copy poems or treatises which might contain satires on their habits, or contradictions of their systems,—and he, therefore, who would possess himself of a work of this modern character, was obliged to obtain it at considerable expense of money or labour. With

⁴ Cry, lament.

the diffusion of a taste for inquiry, the want of books became more and more severely felt, the restorers of learning strove in vain to satisfy the anxious applications of their followers, and the people at large heard of the worth of literature, and were sufficiently improved to desire an acquaintance with it, but found, at the first step towards acquisition, an almost insuperable barrier to their progress.

William Caxton, who contributed so greatly to remove this impediment to the diffusion of knowledge in England, was a native of Kent, and was born in the latter part of the reign of Henry the Fourth. His parents were persons in the middle rank of life, but his mother was sufficiently well-informed to be able to instruct him herself in reading and writing, accomplishments in those days not universally possessed by the female part of the population. At the age of fifteen he was bound apprentice to a Mr Robert Large, a respectable mercer of London, and who, in the year 1430, served the office of lord-mayor. Caxton continued with him till his death, which occurred in 1441, and the integrity with which he had fulfilled his duty was proved by the will of his employer, who left him thirty-four marks, and made the most affectionate mention of his virtuous conduct.

The respect he had acquired with Mr Large, placed Caxton in an advantageous situation among the merchants of the city, and the year after the death of his master, he went to the continent, and was appointed by them to superintend their affairs as factor in Holland and the Low countries. He remained abroad twenty-three years, and during that time was, it would appear, principally occupied in his business as a merchant. But his biographers have not been able to discover any precise details respecting him from the time of his leaving England till the year 1464, when he was appointed one of the two commissioners to whom the English government entrusted the important office of settling the commercial dispute into which it had entered with the duke of Burgundy. It is evident from this circumstance that he had been steadily advancing in fortune and reputation during his residence on the continent, and there is every reason to believe that he, at the same time, acquired a large stock of learning and general information. The Netherlands were at that period the great nursery of erudition; the profoundest and most active scholars were assembled there,—theology and classical literature had poured their richest and most valuable stores into the libraries,—and the churches were filled with the noblest productions of the fine arts. It was impossible that an aspiring and intelligent mind like that of Caxton should remain without profit amid such temptations to learning. But there was another circumstance which could not fail of being viewed by a man of his character with the most intense interest. Printing had been lately invented, and the perseverance and ingenuity with which many of the best scholars in Italy, Germany, and other parts of the continent had furthered the first rude attempts made in the art, were at this period demonstrating in the most striking manner its importance to the interests of literature. It is not known when Caxton commenced his labours as a printer; but soon after his appointment to some official situation in the court of the duchess of Burgundy, the sister of King Edward, he printed his translation of the *Recuyell*, or a collection of the Histories of Troye, by Raoul le Fevre. Both the translation and the printing of

this work were undertaken at the request of the duchess, but were delayed above ten years by the fears which Caxton entertained of his inability to execute the task. He has himself left on record the time employed in this—for that age—laborious enterprize. “The translation,” he says, “was begun in Bruges, the first of Marche, in the yere 1468, continued in Gaunt, and finished in Colen, the 19th of September, 1471.” But this was the least fatiguing part of the design. The version being completed, he then “deliberated in himself,” says he, “to take the labour in hand of printing it together with the third book of the destruction of Troye, translated of late by John Lydgate, a monk of Burye, in English ritual.” It is not unpleasing to hear him utter his complaints respecting the fatigues he had undergone in writing the translation. “Thus,” says he, “end I this book, and for as muche as in wrytynge of the same, my penne is worne, myne hand wery, and myne eyes dimmed with overmuch lokinge on the whit paper; and that age crepeth on me daily, and feebleth all the body, and also because I have promised to dyverce gentlemen and to my frendes to addresse to them as hastily as I might this said booke; therefore I have practised and learned, at my great charge and dispense, to ordeyne this said booke in prynte after the manner and forme as ye may here see, and is not writen with penne and ynke as other bookes been, to the end that every man may have them attones for all the bookes of this streye named. The *Recuyell* of the Historye of Troye, thus imprinted as ye here see, were begonne in one day, and also finished in one day.”

Before leaving the continent, Caxton had also printed another work of some extent,—Bartholomeus de Proprietatibus Rerum; but the date of his return to England is a subject of dispute; and the only settled point in the chronology of this part of his life, is, that in the year 1471 he was regularly established in Westminster as a printer. The ‘Dictes or Sayengis’ of the philosophers, appeared from his press at that period, and the fame he had acquired by his art not only introduced him to the principal men of the country, but procured him the privilege of carrying on his business in the almonry of the abbey,—a circumstance which is to this day kept in mind, by the appellation of the *chapel*, the common name among printers of their work-room.

The works which Caxton now produced in quick succession, are too numerous to allow of our giving their titles. For some time he was the only one who practised the art in this country, but a few years after his establishment in Westminster, some person set up the business at Oxford, and such was the increasing demand for books, that in 1483, an act of parliament was passed, entitling “any artificer or merchant stranger, of whatever realme or country he was or should be of, to bring into the realme and selle by retaile or otherwise, aine bookes writen or printed,” there being, it was stated, “but few printers within the realme, which could well exercise and occupie the science and crafte of printing.” We should form, however, but a very imperfect idea of Caxton’s character, did we view him simply as a printer at this time. While anxiously engaged in overcoming the many difficulties which necessarily attend the exercise of any new art, he was also occupied in producing by his own pen, most of the works on which his press was to be employed. Besides several other translations from the French, he produced one of

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* from that language in 1480, and about the same time finished printing his work, entitled 'The Chronicles of England.' The following year, appeared the translation of Godfrey of Bologne, which he says he made "to the ende that every Christen man may be the better convinced, the enterprize was for the defense of Christendome and to recover the said cyte of Jerusalem." Cicero's *Treatises on Old age and of Friendship*, followed soon after, and in 1482, the celebrated *Polychronicon* of Barnulph Higden, translated into English by Trevisa. In the preface to this work, Caxton says, "that he had carefully rewritten it, and had somewhat changed the rude and olde English, that is to wyte certayne wordes which in these dayes are neither used ne understude."

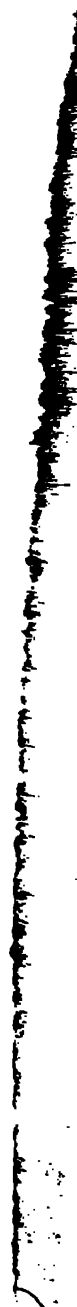
Nothing appears with the name of Caxton, after 1490, and according to the calculation of his most curious biographers, he was then not less than ninety years of age. He was still, however, employed, and the last effort of his industry was directed to the translation of the "*Vitæ Patrum*, or the righte devout and solitairye lyfe of the anciente or olde holy faders, hermytes dwellynge in the deserts." It is a singular circumstance, that he concluded this work on the day he died, which event took place in the latter end of May, or the beginning of June 1492. He was succeeded in his business by a German printer, named De Unde, whom he brought with him from the continent, and an apprentice of his soon after set up the trade in the city. Printing establishments were now also to be found in several other parts of the kingdom, and in proportion to the extension of the business, the materials of the art became improved. It has been observed, that some of the most admirable specimens of typography were produced in the age immediately succeeding its invention; and when it is considered, that the first types used were cut out of wood,—that after the manufacture of metallic letters, the preparations for printing the Vulgate, published at Mentz in 1450, occupied eight years,—and that it was not till 1459 the casting of metal types was introduced,—surprise may well be felt, when the clear and beautiful pages are perused which proceeded from the press before the close of the century.

The character which Caxton bore in his private capacity, was that of a pious, industrious, and, in all respects most virtuous man. His education had been that of a tradesman only, and he often observed that his learning was confined to an acquaintance with English and French. Uninstructed however, as he had been in the higher walks of scholarship, he did much towards enlarging the circle of general literature in this country, and though several of the works he published are strongly embued with the errors common to his age, they were in many respects calculated to create a love of reading, and quicken the appetite for intelligence. To the book of Chivalry which he translated from the French, he affixed an epilogue of his own composition, and did we possess no other means of judging of his character but that, we should be greatly inclined to give him praise for the most generous love of benevolence and high morality.

END OF VOL. I.



FULLARTON AND CO., PRINTERS, VILLAFIELD.



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